Body Image in Male Body-builders:

A qualitative investigation

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research into male body image</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Inclusion/exclusion criteria for review</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Silhouette studies</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Questionnaire studies</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Interview studies</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 Behavioural indicators of body dissatisfaction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Anabolic steroid use</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Theoretical understanding of body image dissatisfaction in men</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Discussion of current literature</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Rationale for the present study</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11 A statement of the aims of the study</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 Method</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Qualitative research- a brief overview</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Grounded Theory</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Central Features of Grounded Theory</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Current epistemological debates within grounded theory</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Methodological criticisms</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 The present study- research procedure</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 The Researcher</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 The researcher’s epistemological position</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Research design</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Participants</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Selection of participants</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Interview Guide and procedure</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Transcribing</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 Grounded theory analysis</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Core category: Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Higher order category: Self-image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Second level category: self-description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1.1</td>
<td>Emotionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1.2</td>
<td>Physical self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>Second level category: Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Second level category: Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Higher order category: Gym culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.1</td>
<td>Second level category: Sharing knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2</td>
<td>Second level category: Supportive and safe environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3</td>
<td>Second level category: Threat to self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Higher order category: Social pressures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1</td>
<td>Second level category: Identification of social pressures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2</td>
<td>Second level category: Social attributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2.1</td>
<td>Internal view of the external world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2.2</td>
<td>External projection of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2.3</td>
<td>Positive social motivator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3</td>
<td>Second order category: Reactive behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Higher order category: Health beliefs and behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1</td>
<td>Second order category: Training – physique or fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2</td>
<td>Second order category: Supplements and steroids, use and attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3</td>
<td>Second order category: Food regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3.1</td>
<td>Diet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3.2</td>
<td>Attitude to body fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3.3</td>
<td>Loss of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Discussion of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Clinical implications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Future research 96
5.4 Limitations of research 97

6.0 Conclusion 99

7.0 Appendices 101

Appendix A: Letter of approval of research from NHS Trust research committee 102

Appendix B: Participant consent form 103

Appendix C: Participant information sheet 104

8.0 References 105
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>An example of a memo from the researchers field diary</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Example of an early developing annotated storyline</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Schematic representation of emergent categories</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Higher order category of Self-image</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Higher order category of Gym culture</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td>Higher order category of social pressures</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Higher order category of Health beliefs and behaviour</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

There is evidence that men are experiencing body image dissatisfaction in growing numbers. The term muscle dysmorphia has been used to describe one expression of extreme body image distress and is thought to be particularly prevalent in male body-builders. This study aimed to explore male body-builders understanding and experiences of their body image. A grounded theory methodology was used, situated within a contextual constructionist epistemology. Five male body-builders were interviewed and the transcripts analysed. Control emerged as the core concept, expressing participants' feelings of control loss and attempts to mediate this. Four higher order categories emerged as areas where issues of control were most obvious; self-image; gym culture; social pressures; and health beliefs and behaviours. A model of the relationships between the categories and control was developed. Feelings of uncertainty about self in relation to body image were evident. Mediation occurred through attempts to control the social environment leading to further immersion within the gym culture. Nutritional beliefs and diet behaviours were another way in which the participants' attempted to exert control over their body image. Implications for clinical practice were discussed, with particular emphasis on men presenting to services expressing distress about their body image in relation to body fat and physique. Recommendations for future research were made and limitations of the study were discussed.
1.0 Introduction

The purpose of the current study is to identify factors associated with male body image concerns through interviews with a sample of men who body-build. In recent years there has been a growing recognition of body image concerns in men (e.g. Grogan, 1999; Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000). Thomas Cash (2002) recently reviewed the epidemiological evidence and found an increase in body dissatisfaction in both men and women.

There is increasing pressure on men to see themselves as embodied beings (Corson & Andersen, 2002). This change is likely to reflect changing societal attitudes toward the male body (Henwood, Gill & Mclean, 2002). In the past men have been treated as disposable commodities (Henwood et al, 2002) to be used as industrial or military resources, a situation that has shaped men’s construction of themselves. However, with the change from an industrial to a technological society, the emphasis on men has shifted to being and appearing to be professionally successful (Faludi, 1999). For men this may mean more than possessing the extraneous trappings of success, such as the right type of car, but also a pressure to possess the right aesthetic presentation.

Researchers have attempted to explain this change in men’s reflections on their bodies and the drive toward the ideal body as a response to perceived threats to masculinity resulting from the changes within society. Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein & Striegel-Moore (1986) proposed that men were using their bodies to differentiate themselves from women as traditional gender roles diminish (Olivardia, 2002), as a way of holding “on to outward appearances of masculinity
through developing a lean, taut, muscular body" (Baker, 1997: p20: cited in Henwood et al, 2002).

The socialisation of the changing ideas about masculinity and male bodies appears to contribute to the growing pressures upon men (Olivardia, 2002). Three papers in particular represent the changing dynamic within the media. Pope, Olivardia, Gruber and Borowiecki (1999) investigated the trend of growing muscularity in toys aimed at boys, and found that it would be impossible for men to attain the build of many of the toys. Leit, Pope & Gray (2000) presented findings from an analysis of Playgirl magazine centrefolds over twenty-five years that has shown an increase in muscle of 27 pounds and a decrease of fat of 12 pounds. Finally, Pope, Olivardia, Borowiecki and Cohane (2001) investigated the growing commercial value of men’s bodies through advertising in magazines aimed at women and found that whereas the proportion of undressed women appearing in the advertisements has remained relatively stable over the last forty years, the percentage of undressed men has risen from 3% to 35%.

It appears that society is moving away from viewing men as throwaway commodities and more as, “objects of consumption, the worth of men’s bodies is determined in a similar way to commodities displayed in a shop window; less by their functional value...and more by their sign value” (Henwood et al, 2002, p183).

Much of the research looking at male body image has concerned itself with quantitative analysis often using existing theories and models of body-image as hypotheses for investigation, producing misleading and conflicting findings in many cases (see Section 1.1). The following section critically reviews the current literature.
1.1 Research into male body image

Interest in male body image as a research topic has developed over the past few years (e.g. Grogan, 1999), particularly with the detection of an extreme expression of these concerns, originally termed reverse anorexia (Pope, et al, 1993), or more recently muscle dysmorphia (Cohane & Pope, 2001; Olivardia, Pope, & Hudson, 2000; Pope, Gruber, Choi, Olivardia & Phillips, 1997; Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000b). At this extreme end, great distress is hypothesised as occurring; men are giving up their jobs to body-build (Phillips, O'Sullivan, & Pope, 1997; Pope et al 2000b), becoming socially isolated and depressed because of feelings of shame about their bodies (Grogan, 1999; Olivardia et al, 2000) and taking large quantities of anabolic steroids to increase muscle growth (Drewnowski, Kurth & Krahn, 1995; Grogan, 1999; Pope et al, 1993; Pope et al 2000b; Tricker, O'Neill & Cook, 1989) with the related risks (e.g. Wroblewska, 1997).

Until the late 1980's, body image difficulties were presented as a female problem (Grogan, 1999), usually associated with eating disorders (e.g. Garner & Garfinkel, 1997). Studies into the cross gender specificity of body image disorders tended to concentrate on what Bruch (1973) termed, 'the drive for thinness'. Studies looking at both men and women were concerned with whether men had a desire to be slimmer. This approach appeared to indicate very low levels of body image disturbance (BID) in men (e.g. Tiggermann, 1992; Williamson & Delin, 2001); therefore, BID was characterised as a predominantly female condition. Men had to display similar disturbances as women to be recognised, i.e. they had to believe that they were overweight despite being obviously underweight. Wider studies of the general population have further supported these findings of gender disparity in BID (see silhouette studies, Section 1.3). These studies found that significantly
more females were reporting feeling overweight than males (e.g. Zellner, Harner & Adler, 1989), however confounding these findings were indications that some men were not satisfied with their appearance, but had no desire to lose weight (e.g. Mishkind et al 1986). It appeared that the research was failing to ask the right questions.

Some papers began to focus on the responses of the men in more detail (e.g. Mishkind et al, 1986). These appeared to show that many men were dissatisfied with their bodies because they considered that they looked too small (Mintz & Betz, 1986; Pope, Katz & Hudson, 1993). It was becoming apparent that male self-concept of body image was different to women’s. Studies began to show that men appeared to favour the mesomorphic body shape and tended to view themselves negatively against this ideal (Muth & Cash, 1997; Pope et al, 1993). This appeared to suggest that male body image perception of themselves was qualitatively different to women’s perception of themselves; but if this is the case, then how can the findings account for a substantial minority of men who appear to follow the typical female trajectory in body image estimation, namely, that they are too big (e.g. Olivardia, Pope, Mangweth & Hudson, 1995)? It appears that male body image is far more complex than was first thought. These findings have opened up an area of research that is still in its infancy. As more data becomes available it appears that body image disorders exists along a continuum for men, and that many have the mesomorphic body distortion.

Recent publications have added to the literature, regarding research into BID and men (e.g. Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002; Pope, Phillips and Olivardi 2000b). Much of their work has been centred around bodybuilders; the book “The Adonis complex: The secret crisis of male body obsession” (Pope et al, 2000b) reviewed research

Grogan (1999) reviewed the literature on body image and included a chapter on male body image. This represented an important and long overdue consideration of male body image. Building upon the work of Grogan (1999), the current review examined the literature on male body image according to specific research methodologies: silhouette studies, questionnaire studies and interviews. Behavioural indicators of body dissatisfaction were also considered, in particular anabolic steroid use.

1.2 Inclusion/ exclusion criteria for review

Databases Medline and Psychinfo were searched using the keywords “male body image”, “men body image”, “muscle dysmorphia” and “megorexia”. Further papers were found by hand searching the references of relevant articles. Finally appropriate references cited in book chapters were collected. Articles were excluded from the review if focused exclusively at female body image, citing past papers as evidence for gender disparity without actually using male participants. Similarly papers concerned with eating disorders, by definition only looking at males who view their body image as too big, were also excluded. However, if such papers also included males for whom body image distortion was in the
opposite direction (body too small) or did not display any distortion they were included.

1.3 Silhouette studies

Ten studies using schematic representations of different sized male bodies were identified in the literature search for the current study. Two used computerised methods of presentation (Pope et al, 2000a; Pope et al 2000b). Five studies (Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Lamb, Jackson, Cassiday and Priest, 1993; Platte, Zeltzen & Stunkard, 2000; Tiggeman, 1992 & Zellner, Harner & Adler, 1989) employed silhouette figure drawings devised by Stunkard, Sorenson and Schulsinger (1983) for the Danish adoption register study of obesity and thinness. The final three studies used self-derived silhouettes (Mishkind et al, 1986; Rand & Wright, 2001; Williamson & Delin, 2001).

A number of these studies failed to find evidence for body image disturbance in men. Fallon & Rozin (1985) compared male and female students and found that whilst women expressed a desire to be thinner, men were content with their current size, indicating that it was also their ideal. Rand & Wright (2001), Tiggemann (1992), Williamson & Delin (2001), and Zellness et al (1989) all found males to be satisfied with their current and ideal body size. However, these studies contained a number of methodological shortcomings. Firstly they were averaging scores. Whilst women had a consistent negative trend toward increasing thinness (e.g. Garner & Garfinkel, 1997; Grogan, 1999; Mishkind et al, 1986), men demonstrated a curvilinear relationship between current and ideal body size. Some men were found to choose lower ideal body sizes whilst others appeared to want to be bigger (Cash, Winstead & Janda, 1986; Grogan, 1999; Mishkind et al, 1986). These findings have been found in more controlled studies (e.g. Pope et al 2000a).
A major critique of all of the studies is the sampling procedure; a number of studies used student populations. Some asked for self-selecting volunteers (Pope et al, 2000a) whilst others used children (Williamson & Delin, 2001). None of the studies indicated that the samples used were normally distributed, although Platte et al’s (2000) study of Amish populations could be classed as a total population study from a highly unusual population. As their study was attempting to understand the role of social pressures upon body image, their sample selection appeared adequate although a normal control sample could have addressed possible validity criticisms.

Another methodological problem is that all of the studies with the exception of Mishkind et al (1986) and Pope et al (2000a & b) used scales that tended to move from ‘thin’ to ‘fat’. They did not account for the desire for muscle. In effect this may have reduced the male scores for ‘increasing bulk’ because, whilst perhaps wishing to be bigger participants did not desire to be fatter (e.g. Pope et al 2000b), therefore they may have chosen an image that reflected bulk without fat but stopped short of the desired size. Mishkind et al (1986) devised a scale to account for extremes of responses in men and found that almost 75% of men were dissatisfied with their current body image. This was divided equally between those wishing to be bulkier and those wishing to be slimmer. It is unfortunate that most of the subsequent studies did not incorporate these findings into their designs.

Pope et al (2000a & b) used a different silhouette scale in the form of The Computerised Body Image Test which used an x and y-axis. In essence, this was a model that could be mapped three dimensionally. This scale measures both ‘body fat’ and ‘muscularity’ from a maximum and minimum position.
In a study looking at male body image perception, Pope et al (2000a) found that across three countries (Austria, France and the United States), men chose an ideal body that was about 28lb more muscular than their actual size. Furthermore the participants estimated that women would prefer male bodies to be on average 30lb more muscular. As with the previous studies, this was not without methodological problems. The participants were volunteer college students who were paid to take part. They were not normally distributed across countries for age or size, although the authors commented that despite this, the findings were consistent and were not compromised by age and size discrepancies. However, Pope et al (2000a) recognised that this type of study may have attracted men with body image concerns, thereby skewing the results toward greater dissatisfaction with body image.

Overall, silhouette studies, if designed correctly, have much to add to the literature. Future research using this model should use scales based upon Pope et al (2000b) to reflect both weight and muscle. Scores should be evaluated closely to account for differentials in male response (Grogan, 1999). In prevalence studies, participants should be distributed normally and self-selecting samples avoided if possible. One exception to this may be when considering psychopathology caused by body dissatisfaction, particularly in vulnerable populations (e.g. bodybuilders, Pope et al, 2000b; Pope et al, 1993). The subtle differences between weight as fat or muscle is an area that would benefit from this model.
1.4 Questionnaire Studies

Twenty-two papers were found in the current study that used questionnaires as either all or part of the research tool. Some studies used ad-hoc questionnaires whilst others used standardised tools and some used a combination of both approaches.

A major American questionnaire study by Cash et al (1986) found that only 18% of male respondents reported little or no concerns about their body image. Looking specifically at weight, 16% of average weight men thought they were underweight and 29% of average weight men thought they were overweight. Caution should be exercised when interpreting these results because, despite 2000 participants being extrapolated from a sample of 30,000 and then matched to the adult population of the United States, they were still a self-selecting, or ‘accidental’ sample (Dane, 1990). The participants in the Cash et al (1986) study had all responded to a questionnaire inviting readers to respond to a published request in a leading American psychological periodical (*Psychology Today*). The questionnaire used was an abbreviated version of the Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (BSRQ- Brown, Cash & Mikulka, 1990) together with additional items dealing with weight concerns, eating, sexuality and psychosocial well-being (Cash et al, 1986).

Other studies have found rates of weight dissatisfaction to be equally divided between men wanting to gain or lose weight (e.g. Drewnowski & Kee, 1987; Furnham & Calnan, 1998; Mishkind et al, 1986). Mintz and Betz (1986) make the point that it is not necessarily men under or overestimating their weight, but actually being dissatisfied with it. This contrasts with samples of body builders found to have extreme body image disturbance (Pope et al, 1993; Pope et al...
2000b); in these cases men see themselves as small, despite actually being very muscular.

For both men and women, dissatisfaction with weight, muscle tone, chest (breast), abdomen and upper thighs has continually increased from 1972 to 1997 (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000). Whilst agreeing that women's body image has become increasingly negative, Muth & Cash (1997) failed to find evidence that it is also increasing for men; they report stasis in male body image. In their study, Muth and Cash used the Body-Image Ideals Questionnaire (BIQ) (Cash & Szymanski, 1995; Szymanski & Cash, 1995). A major problem with the BIQ is that validity and reliability was established using a female student population and there is no evidence that the psychometric properties are similar for men.

Drewnowski & Yee's (1987) research indicated that men were using exercise as their primary means of weight body image control. Upper body image appeared to be particularly important (e.g. Andersen, Bartlett, Morgan & Brownell, 1995; Cash et al 1986; Furnham & Greaves, 1994; Mishkind et al, 1986; Pope et al, 2000b).

Rosen & Ramirez (1998) attempted to compare body image problems in populations with eating disorders and body dysmorphic disorder. They claimed to have found subtle differences in areas of the body that concern men and women, but closer examination of the research revealed this was compared with an all-female eating disordered population.

A number of papers have looked specifically at body building in men and the relationship with body image disturbance (Andersen et al, 1995; Loosemore, Mable, Galgan & Balance, 1989; Pope, Katz & Hudson, 1993; Pope et al, 2000b). These studies found evidence of underestimation of body size or a feeling of being
small, despite being more muscular than average men. For this population weight training and the associated behaviours (see Section 1.6, behavioural indicators of BID) were indicated as being obsessional (Pope et al 2000b). Methodologically these studies are problematic as they used self-selecting volunteer samples. It is likely that men with muscle dysmorphia would not volunteer (Pope et al 2000b) because of the embarrassment felt as a result of perceived small stature. Therefore, these findings are probably an underestimate of the extent of the problem.

A number of psychometric tools have been developed for use in body image studies. The properties of the Body Image Questionnaire (Cash & Szymanski, 1995 & Szymanski & Cash 1995) have already been mentioned, as has the Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (Brown, Cash & Mikulka, 1990). Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia (2000) used what they termed the Adonis Complex Questionnaire (ADQ), a thirteen item instrument looking at perception of body, safety behaviours and affect. Whilst it appears to have good face validity, the ADQ has no psychometric evidence supporting its validity or reliability at present. Edwards and Launder (2000) reported developing a tool that appears to tap into a “drive for muscularity” and “positive attributes of muscularity” (p124). It is specifically aimed at men and early indications suggested that it will be a useful addition to the range of available instruments; predictive validity is presently being investigated (Edwards & Launder, 2000).

The majority of studies that have used questionnaires appear to support the idea that males have a curvilinear relationship between body weight and body dissatisfaction. Research looking specifically at extreme body dissatisfaction in males indicates a muscle dysmorphic syndrome. However, most of the studies have a major problem: they are not taken from normed, controlled samples.
Volunteer student populations are widely used (Cash & Szymanski, 1995; Drewnowski & Lee, 1987; Fallon & Rozin, 1985; Furnham & Greaves, 1994; Mintz & Betz, 1986; Muth & Cash, 1997; Szymanski & Cash, 1995). As with the body-builder volunteers, so other volunteer populations can also be problematic. For instance, in wider population studies, as with student populations, there is a likelihood that people interested in the area may be more willing to volunteer and this could increase results indicating general male BID (Grogan, 1999), the opposite of male body-builder volunteer samples.

1.5 Interview studies

Whilst both silhouette and questionnaire studies have revealed that there is body image dissatisfaction and disturbance in men, they cannot tell us why, or the impact it has. Interview studies can help to shed light upon this area. However, at present very little interview research exists. This is particularly unusual as one may expect qualitative approaches to be preliminary to hypothesis formation and to inform quantitative exploration (Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 1994).

Grogan (1999) cited just one published paper in her review of interview studies (Ogden, 1992) and a work recently published (Grogan & Richards, 2002) that involved focus groups of males aged 8-28 talking about male body image. Pope, Phillips & Olivardia (2000) reported only their own interview work, published in their book *The Adonis Complex*.

For the present review, eight studies using interviews were identified. Four of the papers used a semi-structured approach (Phillips, O'Sullivan & Pope, 1997; Olivardia et al, 2000 and Olivardia et al, 1995; Pope et al, 1993), illustrating the
paucity of, and need for, this type of research. Indeed, despite using this approach, Olivardia et al (2000 & 1995) failed to include any of the corpus of data from the interviews in the paper.

All of the interview papers included reference to expressions of inadequate body size from participants. Ogden (1992) suggested that most men emphasise a link between musculature and confidence, also stating that most men wish to be average, unnoticeable. Whilst the research supports the contention that body image dissatisfaction is characterised by shame and embarrassment, there is conflicting evidence for the ordinariness hypothesis. It appears that the differential between what is deemed ordinary and the actual norm is problematic for men (Andersen et al, 1995; Loosemore, 1989; Mishkind et al, 1986; Phillips et al, 1997; Pope et al, 2000). As one man put it, the urge to hide “smallness” (Pope et al, 1993: p408) becomes increasingly imperative. Comments from both weight lifters and student samples clearly indicated a social comparison feature to male body image. Grogan et al (1997) interviewed four male students, they talked in terms of toned bodies and described how they would feel if they had inadequate looking bodies: “...you look really shit then you feel really shit...if you’re among strangers and you look good it makes you feel more confident” (cited in Grogan 1999, p64). This social comparison is equally apparent for dedicated weight lifters: “the more I trained, the more magazines I looked at, the bigger I wanted to be” (Grogan, 1999, p74). Grogan & Richards (2002) found social comparison to be an important factor for men engaged in discourse about male body image.

The element of shame is illustrated in a comment from an American body-builder, “I remember one day looking in the mirror at myself and hating how I looked. I started wondering how I’d ever tolerated what I looked like when I was back in
college" (Pope et al 2000b; p8). This attitude was despite a recognition that he had been very athletic at college. Olivardia et al (2000) posited a type of obsessive-compulsive element to this behaviour. Preoccupation with body size leads to a drive for greater exercise to combat the feelings of smallness, despite evidence to the contrary, "even though I know on an intellectual level, that I'm actually big, I can get really preoccupied that I look small" (Pope et al 2000b; p84).

Phillips et al (1997) used a case study approach and, in addition to reporting the participant being preoccupied with the idea that his body was too small, he also reported excessive weight lifting, fear of negative evaluation by others and disordered eating. Large amounts of protein rich food and supplements were taken as were large amounts of vitamins. For some men, the difficulties faced with distorted body image can lead to anabolic steroid use (Pope et al 2000b; Wroblewska, 1997). Pope et al (2000b) claimed that steroid use is necessary to go beyond the norm. The knowledge that taking them allows ones body to get bigger acts as a powerful motivator. As one body-builder described, "there was no better feeling" (Pope et al 1993, p408).

1.6 Behavioural indicators of body dissatisfaction

Grogan (1999) reviewed the use of dieting, cosmetic surgery, exercise, anabolic steroid use and human growth hormone by men as various means of changing their bodily shape.

Cosmetic surgery and the use of human growth hormone do not currently appear to be widely used methods of altering the male body, although this pattern may change. Similarly, dieting is not a common method of body image change for men
(Grogan, 1999). Grogan found that men tended to eat more healthily than women rather than restrict calorific intake to lose weight and also to use exercise to regulate this, although she suggested that food regulation may be more prevalent in men sensitive to health issues. Research evidence has supported this idea, although appears to be more specific in relating increased diet manipulation to men engaged in body-building (e.g. Andersen et al, 1995; Braun, Sunday, Huang & Halmi, 1999; Fichter & Daser, 1987; Pope. et al, 2000b; Thiel, Gottfried & Hesse, 1993). Lantz, Rhea & Cornelius (2002) compared power-lifters with body-builders and found body-builders to engage in significantly more dietary manipulation. Therefore, whilst research on general populations of males has suggested that dieting is not a common method of bodily control, there is growing evidence that it becomes a primary tool when associated with endeavours related to body image manipulation (e.g. body-building).

1.7 Anabolic steroid use

Anabolic steroid use (hereafter referred to as steroid use) has been linked to the desire for a more muscular build (Brower, 1992). There has also been a long-term association with sports, emphasising power and weight (e.g. Grogan, 1999). Grogan (1999) reported an increase in the use of steroids among young men and this may be associated with a dissatisfaction with the perceived differential between the ideal and actual body weight and shape (Cash, Winstead & Janda, 1986; Mishkind et al, 1986; Pope et al, 2000a & b;). Drewnowski et al (1995) found that 0.6% of male Americans aged 18 year olds used anabolic steroids monthly. The authors stated that they found no link between steroid use and a
desire for weight gain; however, they recognise that their sample was from a predominantly non-athletic population. It may be reasonable to expect greater use in an athletic population (Epperley, 1993). Wroblewska (1997) cited a study (Welder & Melchert, 1993) that indicated over half a million high school pupils in America are taking anabolic steroids for non-medical reasons, primarily as an aid to muscle gain. Wroblewska (1997) posited that this may be linked to body dysmorphia, or more specifically what Pope et al (2000a & b), among others, have labelled muscle dysmorphia.

Grogan (1999), Tricker et al (1989), Pope et al (2000b), Wright, Grogan & Hunter (2000 & 2001) have all documented the widespread use of steroids in body-building populations. Users report that such a drug will aid in increasing lean body mass (Wright, Grogan & Hunter 2000) and this effect is well documented (Pope et al, 2000b) and a powerful reinforcer.

Wright, Grogan & Hunter (2000 & 2001) received 135 completed questionnaires from two body-building publications asking about body-builders attitudes to steroid use. Whilst many body-building non-users view steroid use as “cheating” (Wright, Grogan and Hunter 2001, p92), positive attributes of steroid use were identified by the majority of body-builders. Wright, Grogan & Hunter (2000) found that 67% of respondents agreed with the statement that ‘steroids maximise hard training’ (p92) and 63% agreed that ‘steroids are necessary for training’ (p92).

However, the adverse effects of steroid use are also well known (e.g. Tricker et al, 1989). Consequently, how can the continued use of steroids by both athletic and to a lesser extent (Drewnowski et al, 1995) non-athletic men be understood? In men with muscle dysmorphia, perceptual inconsistencies lead to them to see themselves
as small, despite being muscular and this leads to psychological distress. Pope et al (2000b) pointed out that there is a plateau of development for the average natural body. No amount of extra training will advance the individual beyond this point; however, steroids allow this natural barrier to be transgressed. This in turn may reduce cognitive dissonance thereby reducing associated anxiety. This relief may only last a short time before the cycle of distress begins again, leading to greater distress and greater steroid use. At present there is no evidence for this hypothesis, but it has good face validity and would be testable by a controlled study.

1.8 Theoretical understanding of body image dissatisfaction in men

Theoretical understanding of body image dissatisfaction in men would merit a review of its own. For the current study therefore, this section will be brief. However, it is felt necessary to point the reader in the direction of current thinking regarding the development of this problem. Earlier the question was posed: why do non-athletic men as well as athletic men demonstrate body image dissatisfaction? An answer may lie in Mead’s (1934) symbolic interaction theory. This approach emphasises the ability to represent self through self-other, actual other and general other. Social psychologists and sociologists have adapted Mead’s ideas to body image and claim that men have become embodied cultural artefacts (Morgan, 1993), as women have been for decades. The consequence of being a gendered, embodied subject is greater self-reflection and comparison (Morgan, 1993). Bordo (1993) claimed that “the size and the shape of the body has come to operate as a member of personal, internal order (or disorder)” (p.94)
The embodiment of males has been both amplified and exploited by the media and business. Leit, Pope & Gray (2000) looked at the evolution of *Playgirl* centrefolds. They found a significant trend for muscular, bigger, yet leaner men. Similarly Pope, Olivardia, Gruber & Borowiecki (1999) looked at the evolution of male action toys over the last thirty years. They found that action figures had become increasingly muscular, to the extent that today, the muscularity of the toys would be beyond even the biggest body-builder. Mort (1988) talked about the, “rise and rise of advertising and marketing aimed at young men“, (p.193). As the thin ideal has been propagated for women (e.g. Grogan, 1999), so the muscular is being driven at men of all ages. Social comparison presents a confusing picture for males, the ideal moving ever further away from the actual, or safely attainable.

The literature indicates that other disorders associated with body image have many factors that may contribute to their development and maintenance (e.g. anorexia; Garner & Garfinkel, 1997). This is an area that is not yet understood in muscle dysmorphia, although a similarity hypothesis with eating disorders would appear to have face validity.

1.9 Discussion of current literature

It is clear from the review of the literature that male body image perception is far more complex than was once thought. Discrepancies in the research, between, say, findings of male satisfaction versus dissatisfaction appear to be a function of poor methodology.

A major limitation of both questionnaire and silhouette approaches is the sample, in terms of sampling and target populations. Many studies have used student
populations. Almost all of the papers reviewed used opportunity sampling in the form of volunteers and methodological problems of self-selecting samples are well known (e.g. Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 1994).

Another methodological drawback was found in the questionnaire studies. It has already been indicated that body image dissatisfaction used to be understood to be a female only problem. Consequently some of the instruments used either failed to use males to validate or, used males as a comparative population rather than the target population. At present, validated psychometric tools for investigating muscularity concerns in men are not widely available, although some are in the process of validation (e.g. The Swansea Muscularity Attitudes Questionnaire, Edwards & Launder 2000; The Adonis Complex Questionnaire, Pope et al, 2000b).

1.10 Rationale for the present study

Whilst most of the early research focused on body image within the general male populations, more recently the emphasis has been on populations deemed to be at risk of muscle dysmorphia. However, these studies have tended to concentrate on establishing prevalence and extent of disability, what Cohane and Pope (2001) call first generation studies. Second generation research looking at the experience of males with the disorder would be useful in shaping an understanding of both the causal relations of development and the effect this has on peoples functioning.

It is clear that interview studies have more to offer the important area of male body image as they give voice to the men’s concerns. A truly qualitative study could help to describe what it is like for men with muscle dysmorphia, how it feels and why they are driven to continue down this potentially destructive path. Equally, a
similar piece of work with a population of males who body-build may help to further tease out the social comparison implications of desiring an "ideal" body and other motivating factors for body image change. Qualitative approaches would be particularly useful with these types of research questions. A qualitative approach using a semi-structured, open-ended interview style could elucidate the experience of males who body-build. This is the approach taken by both Grogan and Richards (2002) and Pope et al (2000b). This type of model should aim to identify themes or categories that are important to men when contextualising themselves as embodied, gendered beings. To this end a Grounded Theory methodology would appear to be suited to this challenge.

1.11 A statement of the aims of the study

The aims of the current study were twofold. Firstly to give voice to the sample of men who agreed to participate and talk about their experiences of and motivations for body-building. It appears from the literature in this area that much is surmised about the experience of men who have concerns about themselves and their bodies, but, until recently (e.g. Grogan & Richards, 2002), these men had not been asked directly to talk about and reflect upon themselves. Secondly it was hoped that themes would emerge from interviews that might point toward a theory of understanding the experience of these men. Furthermore, it was anticipated that an understanding of general male dissatisfaction expressed through their bodies would shed further light upon the emergent problem of muscle dysmorphia.
2.0 Method

2.1 Qualitative research- a brief overview

Current research paradigms have relied upon the quantitative, positivist tradition and the review of the literature (above) indicates the problems of this approach to research in a developing field. It is clear in the research literature that a priori assumptions have been made about men's lived experience. Frameworks designed to explain the observed phenomenon are informed by assumptions about what results should emerge (Charmaz, 2000). In essence, the research question defines the process (Valiga & Mermel, 1985). Inherent in this statement is the crux of scientific research, it is not a value free process; however, value free assumptions underpin a positivistic approach. Such was the allure of the positivist model for science that it came to define what science was. This was true of the natural sciences and became the benchmark of any social science aspiring to be accepted into the scientific community. In short, the epistemology of science became a closed shop and psychology (Parker, 1994), along with other social sciences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) began using the positivist paradigm in research.

During the 1950's, 1960's and much of the 1970's, the positivist, cause and effect relational model dominated psychological research (Parker, 1994), much of which was being undertaken in laboratory settings. Within this model, cause and effect relationships are analysed statistically to test a priori hypotheses, the central premise being that one only needs to look and record to truthfully quantify human behaviour. However, it was not until the late 1960's and early 1970's that the singular positivist position began to be consistently challenged within social sciences such as sociology and anthropology (Vidich & Lyman, 2000).
Central to the developing challenge of the traditional scientific model was, and still is, the ontological question. Can any observation and measurement be value-free? All human enterprise can be characterised as situation-specific and derived from both individual and societal positions. Therefore can there ever be one, unchallengeable reality, or are there multiple realities socially constructed and changing? In short, the argument rests on whether there is a single static reality or whether there are multiple fluid realities. Traditional, positivist notions of science rest upon the assumption that objectivity is attainable and laws of nature can be discovered; in essence, the truth is out there.

The positivist approach assumes a powerful position within science to the extent that it became synonymous with science (Nielson, 1990), what Jurgen Habbermass (1971) described as scientism, meaning science’s belief in itself. When this happens, science ceases to be one form of knowledge, rather knowledge must be identified with science. Becker (1996) summarised this power base within research succinctly, “A can call B to account for not answering A’s question properly, but B has no such obligation to A”, where A is positivistic approaches and B is what may be called constructivist (e.g. Charmaz, 2000; Madill, Jordan & Shirley, 2000). Becker goes on to describe this relationship as power politics in academia rather than epistemology, although the debate about hierarchy of respected and accepted research is often presented as epistemological argument. The power dynamic is most acutely observed in the requirement of qualitative research to fully explicate the position of the researcher and situate the work within a relevant framework within the body text of reported research. However, this can be viewed as a particular strength for qualitative researchers and the data they
offer. Indeed, within radical constructivist paradigms, full explication of position forms a central part of data description.

Despite the politics of science, a qualitative epistemology has emerged. The defining characteristics of this approach has its foundations in Mead’s (1934) development of the theory of Symbolic Interactionism (Layder, 1993). Mead proposed that symbolic interactionism rested on three premises and these had a fundamental influence on how the research process was viewed:

1- Humans act towards their environment, both people and objects on the basis of the meanings that specific people and objects have for them.

2- Meanings are derived from social interaction, communication.

3- Meanings are established, changed and refined through the interpretations the individual makes.

Understanding the research process from Mead’s perspective introduces the role of the researcher as an active participant in the process. An acknowledgement that what one sees is influenced by how one looks and that by looking, one immediately changes the environment one is studying; in essence the research process can be viewed as introducing a number of variables to the situation. Therein lies one of the fundamental differences between the qualitative and quantitative epistemologies. The researcher, far from being a dispassionate observer, is an active participant with an aim of describing data at a given point in time (Becker, 1996) with an emphasis on the generation and development of data (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Becker (1996) argued that research within the social sciences should aim to not only take a viewpoint of others, i.e. attempt to represent others, which is arguably what quantitative research aims for, but also to
give voice to the individual or group. A central criticism of the quantitative approach is that it is reductionist, large samples are taken and responses distilled when perhaps the interesting findings lie at the margins. This is precisely what was occurring with the research on male body image prior to Mishkind et al, (1986; see earlier literature review) and continues (e.g. Tiggeman, 1992) because of the primacy of the quantitative approach. Of course it is true that all research distils its data, otherwise one would be left with a mass of detail that is nothing more than transcription (Becker, 1996).

Blumer (1969) recognised that all research describes a viewpoint and interprets the meanings of those we involve. The crucial factor is how accurately that meaning is represented. Central to this point is the meaning represented by the author and derived by the reader. This is where qualitative research methods have an advantage; the reader will know the position taken by the researcher. Of course, in quantitative research, one also knows the relative position of the author, as, by definition quantitative research lives within the positivist, empirical paradigm. This, as already discussed, assumes objectivity, reliability and validity and is a position that is rarely questioned within quantitative research.

The extent to which the researcher discusses the influence of the research process upon the data that emerges is largely determined by ones ontological position. Charmaz (2000) and Madill et al (2000) recognised that different ontological frameworks exist within a qualitative epistemology. This is important because ontology is often used to define the differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies (e.g. Henwood, 1996).
2.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is a widely used qualitative method of research. It was developed by two sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss and described in their book 'The Discovery of Grounded Theory' published in 1967. It evolved out of a concern that sociology was becoming a mechanism for verification of existing theories through its adherence to quantitative research methods and that theory generation was being neglected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The term grounded theory can be said to have two meanings (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995). Firstly it describes theory grounded in the experience and accounts of everyday lives. Secondly it is a research method for deriving theory from systematically gathered data and analysing it through the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), where analysis is, "the interplay between researchers and data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; p13). It is a rigorous method for deriving substantive theory (Scwandt, 1997), with concepts and categories developed from constant-comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) by continually cross-comparing new emerging data and ideas back to earlier data. New ideas and concepts are introduced into the evolving research framework as they emerge to establish whether these ideas cohere with new participants and concepts are refined during this process. Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe that this framework should be flexible enough to support creativity, which they see as fundamental to the research process.

2.3 Central Features of Grounded Theory

1) Constant comparative method. Described as a central feature of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994), the constant comparative method describes the
interplay between the existing and newly emerging data. Data is constantly analysed and cross-compared, sensitising the researcher to the similarities and differences within the data thereby facilitating the comprehension of the complex emerging data (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995).

2) Theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity has been described as researcher insight (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Instances of insight are not chance occurrences according to Strauss & Corbin but products of "prepared minds" (p47) engaged in the constant comparative method. Theoretical sensitivity is developed from four main sources (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Abduction (Pierce; cited in Grbich, 1999) is the concept that the researcher’s knowledge base of the area under investigation stimulates thought and ideas as does ones professional background and training. Personal experience is another factor in theoretical sensitivity. Finally, theoretical sensitivity emerges in the constant cross-comparison of data. Experience is something that cannot be divorced from the research process. Awareness of the impact of ones experiences helps sensitise the researcher to the possibility of intrusions of pre-held ideas into the emerging data and can provide a template against which to check emergent ideas about the data.

3) Theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling describes a procedure where the sampling process evolves as data emerges (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the aim is to sample along the line of categories and dimensions, to look for examples of emergent data to refine ideas and fill conceptual gaps (Charmaz, 2000). Charmaz (2000) describes theoretical sampling as a pivotal part of the development of formal theory.
2.4 Current epistemological debates within grounded theory

It is argued that both Glaser and Strauss’s (1967), and Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) description of grounded theory have their roots in positivist epistemologies (Charmaz, 2000). Whilst it is true that Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued that a reality is available to be discovered, their interpretations of grounded theory have evolved; Strauss and Corbin (1998) recognised the notion of shared worlds of experience between researcher and participant (Charmaz, 2000). Strauss and Corbin (1998) also elucidated their position on the notion of objectivity. They claim that complete objectivity is impossible and they argued for an awareness of the context in which the researcher operates whilst striving to minimise, where possible, subjectivity. This stance can be described as a contextualist (or contextual constructionist) position to grounded theory (e.g. Madill et al, 2000). Radical constructionist perspective to grounded theory have also been described (e.g. Charmaz 1995; Madill et al, 2000). All grounded theorists will use similar techniques in the gathering and analysis of data, the central issue is the ontological position of the researcher rather than the historical background to the development of grounded theory. Reflexivity to changing research conditions is a central feature of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) “in the form of prevailing ideas, ideologies or technologies” (p276). Charmaz argued for a critical constructionist approach to grounded theory and bases her critique of Strauss and Corbin’s approach from this perspective; however, it is crucial to an understanding of the current debate to recognise that all positions are value laden, including constructionism, and that epistemological criticism depends upon the philosophical position of the writer. This does not make Charmaz’s position any more or less valid than that of Strauss and Corbin’s, but serves to highlight a strength of
grounded theory, that it can be used by researchers of differing epistemological positions, whether realist, contextualist or radical constructionist (e.g. Madill et al, 2000; Charmaz, 2000).

2.5 Methodological criticisms

A central criticism of grounded theory is that those purporting to use the research method do not develop theory from data (Charmaz, 1995), rather, descriptions of the area under investigation is produced. Strauss & Corbin (1994) pointed to the diffusion of grounded theory methodology, what Barker, Wuest & Stern (1992) called “method slurring” (p 1355) and confusion over which grounded theory is appropriate as a major factor in methodological shortcomings in grounded theory research. For instance, Strauss & Corbin (1994) pointed out that the naïve researcher may adhere to the original publication of the discovery of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) thereby, “missing the later, more realistic and balanced modifications of the book's purposeful rhetoric” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; p. 277).

If diffusion of grounded theory risks the loss of key elements and the use of the basic process of grounded theory without developing conceptual variation risks losing rich data (Charmaz, 1995), one is presented with a dichotomy. Perhaps it is easier to understand diffusion of grounded theory within a naïve framework. It may be purposefully understood to refer to the difficulties encountered by inexperienced practitioners of qualitative research methods where techniques from one approach can be confused with another. For instance Barker et al (1992)
described methodological confusion and differences between grounded theory and phenomenological analysis.

Another major criticism of grounded theory research is that data is often forced rather than emergent (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Whilst this can be attributed to the inexperienced researcher, it is also part of the current methodological debate within grounded theory. The most striking illustration of this debate is the very public disagreement about the development of grounded theory between its originators, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. It has been argued (Glaser, 1992) that Strauss’s development (and latterly Strauss & Corbin, e.g. 1990; 1998) of grounded theory has moved away from induction toward deduction and the criticism that the link between data and theory generation has been weakened. Glaser’s (1992) criticism was in response to the development of coding strategies past the axial analysis. Strauss & Corbin (e.g. 1990; 1998) argued that their approach added sensitivity to the process and encourages data to emerge. Glaser (e.g. 1992) argued that at best, it is a tool for validity and at worst, forces data that becomes simply the opinion of the researcher. Glaser’s position is debatable and enters the territory of ontology and epistemology that has already been discussed.

A criticism that is open to all research, but perhaps more pertinent to qualitative approaches is the accurate reporting of what one finds. With grounded theory, one is unsure of what will emerge and the danger is, from the researcher’s perspective, that nothing exciting appears; “a consequence of finding out about the details of everyday life is that many events and actions turn out to have a mundane explanation seldom accounted for in our theories” (Becker, 1996; p.60). Again an inexperienced researcher may miss the significance of such findings and struggle to force data that may not exist.
It appears that methodological criticisms of grounded theory are similar to those of other qualitative research methods. It has already been discussed that criticism both within qualitative research traditions and the wider research field is bound up with ontological and epistemological positions, so too are criticisms of grounded theory. As with methodology generally, the best counter to this critique is transparency, in terms of one’s own philosophical position, professional background and interest in the area under study and the methodological process used. By explicating these areas a researcher can hope to provide a pathway guiding the reader toward an understanding of how the data was generated.
3.0 The present study - research procedure

The current research was approved and supported by the employing NHS Trust of the researcher in November 2002 (see Appendix A). It was the decision of the Trust research committee that ethical approval need not be sought because of the non-clinical sample and the nature of the research question. However, it was agreed that, should a participant reveal distress as a result of training patterns, eating behaviours or substance use they would be directed to contact appropriate services. This situation did not arise.

The method of data collection, participant selection and general research design are detailed within this section. First the researcher background and epistemological position are presented.

3.1 The Researcher

At the time of writing, the researcher was a trainee clinical psychologist working in an older adult clinical psychology department. He had five and a half years of clinical experience working in a variety of settings including twelve months in a specialist eating disorders service.

The researcher decided to conduct the current study from a background of both personal and clinical interest. He has a long-standing interest in sport both as an observer and participant. The potential health risks of some sports were apparent to him from observations in both the clinical and personal fields. The current research idea was triggered when the researcher read a paper by Pope, Katz & Hudson, (1993) detailing what they called “reverse anorexia” in a sample of male body-builders. The discovery of this paper coincided with a growing realisation
that many of the men presenting to the eating disorders service were exhibiting a constellation of factors, many of which appeared to concern body image and ways of manipulating this.

The researcher was relatively inexperienced in using grounded theory before this study but had knowledge of both quantitative and qualitative methods gained both during and prior to clinical training.

3.2 The researcher's epistemological position

Grounded theory has been described as having its roots within a positivist epistemological position (e.g. Charmaz, 2000); however, grounded theory has also been described as a set of procedures for deriving and analysing data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) the results of which will be dependent upon the epistemological position of the researcher. Grounded theory is a developing set of techniques (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990 & Strauss & Corbin, 1998) that can be used from a range of epistemological perspectives (Charmaz, 2000: Madill et al, 2000). As already discussed, the current debates surrounding grounded theory appear to be arguing for a constructionist grounded theory. The author found himself moving toward this position whilst rejecting radical constructionism.

This study and its analysis can be best described as situated within a contextual constructionist framework (e.g. Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997; Madill et al, 2000). The researcher's position is that knowledge is local, situation specific and conditional upon the prevailing environment. Interactions occurring within the system are observed by the researcher who becomes a critical factor in the forces shaping what is recorded. However, unlike radical constructionism, a contextualist
position argues for a grounding of data within the participants' experience, in this study through the transcripts. Whilst the researcher took the position of situational reality, that is a reality imbued with subjectivity of both researcher and participant, he also felt that underlying logic was available to be discovered (Madill et al, 2000); both positions describing a contextual constructionist epistemology.

3.3 Research design

A qualitative methodology was employed to follow a grounded theory approach. This method was identified as most appropriate as the literature review revealed that very little research had attempted to give voice to the perspectives on body-image, of men who body-build. The raw data was provided from five interview transcripts and analysed using Strauss & Corbin's (1998) methodology whilst attempting to situate the findings within a contextual constructionist framework (e.g. Madill et al 2000; Charmaz, 2000).

3.4 Participants

The participants were five men, aged between 23-42 years (mean age 33.2 years), who regularly body-build. Whilst it was uncertain at the time of approaching prospective participants what 'regularly' would mean, it became clear that all of the men trained for at least two hours a day, five days a week. To ascertain whether this was considered a normal amount of training for someone serious about body-building, the participants' opinion was sought. All concurred that the level of commitment required to train at this level indicated serious body-builders.
This method of operationalising a variable such as “regular body-builder” follows the reflexive model advocated in grounded theory (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

All participants were amateur body-builders, that is, none had a professional body-building card. One competed at amateur level, one had competed and was considering returning to compete. Four participants were in full-time employment, one was a full-time student who also worked. One of the full-time participants was pursuing a part-time undergraduate degree.

3.5 Selection of participants

Theoretical, purposive sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) was used in this study as the function of sampling in qualitative research is to select information-rich cases (Grbich, 1999). In terms of sampling, the concern for studies aiming to build theory is with representativeness of concepts and how these vary (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Issues of validity and reliability do not rely upon the constituency of participants representing the general population as in quantitative methods. Within a contextual-constructionist epistemology (see Section 2 and Section 3.3), reality is considered to be situated within a particular framework of time and context, therefore, it is not possible to ever fully replicate any study. As a consequence, validity relies in part, upon the richness of the participant interview. In grounded theory, categories and themes emerge and are checked with other participants and this is theoretical sampling (e.g. Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

For the current study a snowballing technique was used. This is a procedure that relies upon word of mouth and recommendation from participants. The first
participant was known to the researcher, he then suggested another who might be appropriate. The second participant was approached by the initial participant regarding his willingness to be interviewed. Once verbal consent was gained, then the researcher contacted them to discuss the study further. Participant sampling proceeded on this basis for the whole study. This method was considered appropriate to the current study for a number of reasons. The researcher felt that appropriate prospective participants were more likely to be identified by someone who was familiar with training schedules. They were more likely to respond favourably if asked whether they would consider participating by someone whom they knew as a fellow body-builder rather than being approached by a stranger or asked to volunteer through notices in gyms. The prospective participant had the opportunity to decline taking part without ever meeting the researcher, minimising any element of coercion, or feelings of guilt by the participant.

Participant interviews stopped after five were conducted, primarily because the theoretical sampling techniques appeared to indicate that data was being replicated and had reached saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Reflecting data back to the initial participant for discussion and comparing the current data with previous research indicated that saturation had occurred.

Elliot (1989) analysed sample sizes in qualitative research and used probability theory to suggest that a range of five to ten interviews is likely to be adequate. This was supported by Barker, Pistrang & Elliot (1994) who suggested five to ten interviews to be sufficient for saturation where rich protocols are used and theoretical sampling is enhanced.
3.6 Interview Guide and procedure

Prior to commencing the interview, all participants were given an information sheet to read and discuss with the researcher detailing the study and their rights as voluntary participants (see Appendix B). They were then asked by the researcher to sign a declaration saying that they voluntarily agreed to take part in the study (see Appendix C). A key element for some participants was that all personally identifying material would be removed from the transcripts so that their participation remained anonymous.

A semi-structured open-ended interview was used. The aim was to commence with an area that it was thought all participants would feel comfortable talking about, i.e. their training schedule, before either moving onto other areas highlighted through theoretical sampling or areas introduced by the participant. Used in this way, the interview schedule was a tool that aided the conversation rather than guided it. The strength of this was that conversation flowed more naturally than may have been if the interviews had been constrained by adherence to a schedule of questioning. It was important to start with an area likely to be non-threatening and comfortable as research indicates that men find it difficult to talk about their bodies (e.g. Pope et al, 2000) often because sociocultural norms deem this to be unmanly (Henwood, Gill & McLean, 2002). This approach was successful on two fronts, both in allowing the men to settle into the conversation and through the reflexive nature of the conversations allowing the men to guide the dialogue so having a sense of control over the situation.

The danger of using this model is that conversation can become overtaken with areas and themes that, in retrospect, are not significant. Specific areas can be over-represented in a conversation if it is a particular interest for the respondent without
adding anything further to the interview. The former did not occur as all of the men appeared keen and willing to talk about their experience of themselves as men who body-build. However, one participant (see Transcript 2) talked at relative length about his biochemical knowledge of the interaction of fuel intake and muscle development. This interview was contrasted with the other interviews and utilised to provide a check for commonality and saturation of this area of knowledge.

Interviews took place in a range of settings: gymnasium, participant’s home, place of work and a shopping centre. At all times the participants chose where they were most comfortable being interviewed. All participants were clearly informed that the interviews were to be recorded and transcribed verbatim and that all identifying information would be removed or changed. They were aware that they could request their interview be withdrawn at any time and that the tape would be given to them. No participant withdrew.

All participants were told that the interviews would last about an hour, although they could shorten or lengthen this as they chose. The interviews lasted between fifty and eighty minutes, interview four and five being shorter but the material much denser, as theoretical sampling allowed the interviews to become more focused. This did not appear to cause a problem within the individual interview process.

3.7 Transcribing

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. During transcription all material that could identify the participant was removed, names were either changed or, where material was more sensitive, notes made in the body transcript, for example;
S: I got the (geographical area) Senior Men's record, which I think still stands, the (geographical area) Under 20 record, (Interview 4; page 1; line 24-26)

Occasionally certain words were not clear enough on the recording. Where this occurred it was indicated within the transcript.

Names were changed for each participant and the initial of the new name used within the transcript, for instance S in the above example refers to Steve. The I in the example below refers to the researcher and stands for interviewer. This was used in each transcript.

Pauses were recorded in the first interview through the use of continuation dots (........), for example;

P: So now I enjoy it, it's.......about me getting bigger....... to an extent to see if I can, erm, I guess it's about being different as well.

I: Being different from..............? (1; lines 112-114)

Continuation dots were discontinued after careful analysis of the first transcript indicated that they were not adding anything significant to the material. Strauss & Corbin (1990) were clear that the process of transcription should follow a similar path as data collection and be seen as such, namely transcription should use the method of theoretical sampling. They do not indicate the need for recording pauses, as is the case when using discourse analysis and it was apparent that it was only adding time to the process rather than useful content.

The first three interviews were transcribed by the researcher, the final two were typed by a paid secretary. Instructions were given prior to transcription of the final two interviews and they were both checked by the researcher whilst listening to the interviews. The decision to have someone else transcribe the final two interviews
was based upon the pragmatics of time. Strauss & Corbin (1990) were ambivalent about having an outside agent transcribe and make scant mention of transcription by the second edition of *Basics of Qualitative Research* (1998) except to suggest that “if the transcription can be done by someone else, then perhaps the workload can be reduced somewhat” (p290). However, the researcher felt that transcribing the first three interviews had sensitised him to the process and emergent data, and as such was a useful exercise.

### 3.8 Grounded theory analysis

It has already been noted that grounded theory is an evolving set of techniques for analysing data. This is evident when comparing Strauss & Corbin’s earlier (1990) relatively linear analytic framework of analysis with their more recent account (1998) which advocates a free-flowing process through which the researcher can move interchangeably between levels of coding. Indeed the process of doing grounded theory analysis dissuades the researcher from attempting to impose a temporal pattern (Charmaz, 2000). Despite this there is step-wise progression in terms of the analytic procedure from open-coding to axial and finally selective coding. However, at all levels of coding it is natural that ideas about relationships and meaning emerge, therefore pragmatically coding for each level occurs throughout analysis. This process is aided by the use of memos (see part 3.8d).

#### 3.8a: Microanalysis

In the current study coding proceeded through the act of microanalysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Generally microanalysis is taken to mean line-by-line analysis, as in the current study, however, in its entirety, microanalysis refers to the close
examination of any source data at any level necessary to generate initial categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss & Corbin stated that microanalysis takes three forms: analysis of the raw data and awareness; analysis of the interpretations of the events described by both the participant and the researcher; and the interplay between the interpretation of the researcher and emergent data.

3.8b: Open coding

Open coding is the initial analysis of the data in which concepts emerge and the researcher becomes sensitised to the developing ideas informing the research problem (Charmaz, 2000). As concepts develop they can be used as sensitising points to reflect back into the emergent data to examine whether similar concepts are evident elsewhere or whether areas under analysis can contain more than one concept.

The researcher begins to group similar concepts as the numbers grow to form categories, again these are reflected back into the corpus of data to check whether they are likely to be valid constructs emerging from the data or whether they have been forced. Categories are concepts that describe phenomena which depict problems and issues important to the participant.

As categories emerge they are developed in terms of their properties and dimensions with an aim of categorical differentiation. Properties are the general or specific characteristics of a category whose dimensions can be represented along a continuum.

3.8c Axial coding

Axial coding was the next level of analysis used in the current study. It is so called because it is a process in which analysis occurs around the axis of categories.
Categories are further refined to relate them to sub-categories at the level of properties and dimensions. Strauss & Corbin, (1998) describe this process as the paradigm (p124), a “perspective taken toward data”...that...”helps to systematically gather and order data in such a way that structure and process are integrated” (p128). Initially Strauss & Corbin described this approach as The Paradigm Model (1990) and described a fairly rigid approach to axial coding. Later refinement of their approach to grounded theory (Strausa & Corbin; 1998) appears to have taken account of the criticism of prescription and rigidity (e.g. Glaser, 1992) and they now explain the paradigm (1998) in broader terms as another tool to aid analysis. The aim being to elucidate the natural research process and the natural interplay between emergent data and contextual conditions within which this occurs.

3.8d Selective coding and theory development (core concept)

In the current study selective coding was used to integrate and refine categories into theory. Selective coding advances through the process of axial coding, whereby a number of categories emerge that may appear to have similarities. At this higher, abstract level selective coding aims to determine whether categories can be amalgamated into a core category. Throughout this process analysis was taking place at all levels, including being aware of the possible emergence of a core category. However, it is during selective coding that the process is synthesised and theory development proceeds. Strauss & Corbin (1998) recognise that deciding upon a core or central category can be difficult and recommend using a storyline, a descriptive narrative, about the central concept to see whether it fits with the researcher, whether the narrative makes sense in terms of the wealth of emergent data. If so it can be said to fulfil the criteria of a core concept.
3.8e Memo writing

In the current study memo-writing assisted the process of constructing a storyline and facilitated the handling of emergent data throughout the analysis of results. Memo-writing directs the analysis as part of the constant-comparative approach used in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It allows the researcher to record ideas prompted by analysis of a transcript and to check whether they are present in other transcripts. An early criticism of Strauss & Corbin’s approach to grounded theory was the under-emphasis of the role of memo-writing as a tool that allows the researcher to follow the process of emergent themes and categories and facilitates the researchers reflection upon their role in the analytic process (e.g. Charmaz, 1990; Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995). However, this criticism was based upon the first edition of Strauss & Corbin’s (1990) Basics of Qualitative Research. In the second edition (1998), Strauss & Corbin stated that memo’s are important, “because they record the progress, thoughts, feelings, and directions of the research and researcher – in fact, the entire gestalt of the research process” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; p218).

An example of a typical memo in the current study and written during the transition between open and axial coding is given below (figure 1);

```
already control appears to be emerging as a (the) core category. Emergent concepts and possible categories all suggest elements of control. What isn’t evident is why this seems important, although one may be able to link to esteem and aesthetics?
```

Figure 1: An example of a memo from the researchers field diary
4.0 Results

Data was analysed using the method outlined in the Procedure (Section 3). Over nine hundred concepts were generated by open coding and were examined individually to identify possible themes and similarities. From this analysis, categories were developed. Axial coding proceeded on the basis of the properties and dimensions of the emergent categories and were linked accordingly. Whilst appearing to be a linear process, development of ideas and categories took place at all levels and this process was aided by the use of memos to elucidate ideas and provide data for storylines (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) with which to understand the emergent material.

In addition to memo writing, a blackboard was used to draw out emergent storylines. This was constantly updated and served to provide an immediate and graphic illustration of the data as it developed. An example of this is given below in Figure 2. Each record of open-coding was colour coded to facilitate the process of constant comparison, i.e. are the themes and concepts emerging across the participants or are they unique to one respondent? This process also facilitated the gathering of examples to illustrate categories.

A total of 12 second level categories were identified and four higher order categories were developed from these during axial coding. The four higher order categories were identified in the text of all interviews. Second order categories were identified in at least four of the transcripts, as were first order categories.
The results were structured around the four higher order categories: self-image; gym culture; social pressures; and health beliefs. The core category of control is described first followed by in-depth descriptions of the four higher-order categories, each with reference to the second order categories identified as linked to the higher category. Where appropriate, reference is made to subsequent categories. Diagrams are provided to orientate the reader and Figure 3 shows the overall relationship of all of the categories, in essence a pictorial representation of the emergent results. Diagrams are also used to present the lower order relationships for each higher order category.
Examples from transcripts are presented to illustrate the categories and these contain a number to identify the participant and a line number from the transcripts, for example;

"I: How big and strong do you think that is? What could you be? Are you there?  
S: No. Not yet. It's hard to define it. I suppose at the moment I'm floating in a no man's land, 'cos I always thought I was going to be like a top strong man, and I just couldn't get quite strong enough and I couldn't just get quite heavy enough."

(4:122-125), denoting interview four, lines 122-125

For each transcript the participant was given a false name. In transcript four above, the name was Steve, therefore the S denotes Steve. The 'I' denotes Interviewer (researcher) and is constant throughout the five transcripts.

4.1 Core category: Control

The core category identified from analysis was Control. Issues of control were evident in all transcripts and were explicit from the earliest stages of data collection, although not necessarily as the core category. Figure 3 presents a schematic representation of the emergent categories.

The issue of control is multifactorial and is more easily understood within the context of the contributing, higher order categories. However, an overview is necessary to situate the overall concept. It appears that the participants have a sense of dislocation from their perceptions of how they should look in terms of physique and behaviour and their perceptions of what they feel society expects of them and whether they can achieve these ideals.
Figure 3: Schematic representation of emergent categories

- Self-description
- Difference
- Goal
- Food regulation
- Enhancers
- Training
- Reactive Behaviour
- Health-beliefs & Health Behaviour
- Self-image
- Control
- Gym Culture
- Social Pressures
- Social Attributions
- Identification
- Shared knowledge
- Support and safety
- Threat to self
The cognitive dissonance evident in the transcripts illustrated both internal and external pressures in many aspect of their functioning. The men attempted to cope with this by controlling the environments around them, either through rationalisation of their behaviour as normal or exclusion of either themselves as ordinary men, through elevation (difference), or by excluding incoming data, social, physical or psychological.

Control appeared to be the over-riding coping mechanism used by the participants. However, within the attempts to mediate their environments, some of the choices and decisions seemed to further attack the integrity of the self and therefore further undermine the sense of control. One way of coping with this appears to be a retreat into a sub-culture where the thoughts and behaviours are considered normal. The body-building (gym) culture was perceived as both welcoming and safe but also prone to dangers toward integrity if one moved out of the prevailing group identity. Whilst, within this culture, control rested with the group in terms of deciding the norms, the individuals decision to join the group appeared to satisfy their need to find a place that understands the individual’s identity as a male who body-builds.

The concept of control as presented here was not necessarily negative, for instance;

"because I started getting my diet right, my training started to go right" (2: 229).

This indicates a reassertion of control over what had been a chaotic situation;

"I’d been trying to hold my food, not eat food and things like that, and you kind of binge eat then because you’re starving." (2:227-228).

However, detailed analysis showed that situations such as that described above arise from earlier attempts at control. The issue of control as the core category will
become clearer through reference to the higher order categories and the links between them.

**4.2 Higher order category: Self-image**

Self-image emerged as a fundamental category to understand how the participants viewed themselves in a variety of modalities. The higher category includes the second level category of self-description with the sub-categories of emotionality linked to self, relationship between concept of self and physical body change. Also linked to self-image are the second level categories of goal orientation and difference. Figure 4 illustrates these relationships.

![Diagram of Higher order category of Self-image](image)

Figure 4: Higher order category of Self-image

As with all of the Figures presented, whilst a hierarchical mechanism is suggested, the relationships between categories are far more complex than simple annotation can imply. For instance, the second level category *difference* describes how the participants use this concept to make sense of their position and explain their behaviour. Therefore, not only does it touch upon each area within the higher-order category of self-image but is intrinsically linked to the other higher
categories. However analysis did not support the inclusion of difference as a higher category in its own right and situated it within self-image.

Positive self-regard appears to be central to the integrity of the participants, as it is for most people. However, the personal understanding of self-worth and regard was bound up within a narrative of body image and continual progress.

"if I'm very strong and I'm very well, then I'm a more confident person and a person that has a greater value, in terms of everything." (4:221-222)

"every person that comes through the door that wants to buy a supplement wants to change something about their body-shape. Generally this is what I class as a positive change." (2:106-109)

Self-image was divided into three second level categories, self-description, difference and goals, as shown in Figure 4.

4.2.1 Second level category: self-description

This second level category was divided between emotionality and physical change. It encompasses both the physical and psychological understanding that the participants had in relation to their concept of self and their attempts to manipulate the factors that contributed to distress.

"The fact that if I could look in shape, look muscular then that would give me confidence, almost like, I'm better than you because, 'cos I'm in better shape" (2:601-603)

"You think to yourself, do I look ready for the competition?, do I look small?, or have I got a lot of weak points?" (5:355-357)
"I: ...you said that you don't really perceive personally, you don't see yourself, your back, as being particularly big although you know it is your strongest feature in terms of the training. You don't see that.

P: No,

I: So was there a kind of a dichotomy there of what they were saying and what you think? Or....

P: Errr, yeah, I don't think that my muscular, the muscles that I have are particularly noticeable."

These excerpts are examples of the types of way that the participants were reflecting upon themselves using a narrative around their size and shape. This part of the discourse appeared to be a motivator for attempting to establish control over this aspect of their being. Participant four introduced the notion of the "little boy in a gorilla suit" (4:9), as a means of representing why some men body-build,

"People have different reasons for training. I mean some of them, vanity, for some it's kind of psychological weakness in terms of, you know, little boys in a gorilla suit. It's the element of, er, presenting an image that's more powerful and more confident than what's actually inside that particular person." (4:10-13).

This description straddles the artificial divide within the model between physical and emotional self and offers a glimpse of what it is that the men are attempting to control.

Self-description is divided into two sub-categories: emotionality and physical self. Both of these sub-categories appeared to contain the dimension of insight, whether it was present, absent or somewhere in between.
4.2.1.1 Emotionality

The sub-category of emotionality refers to the ways the men talked about the emotional impact of their lifestyle upon themselves. The discourse was not necessarily presented as reflection but as statement, for instance the following extract is reflection;

"you're doing it (training) because you want to feel better about yourself, and they will kid themselves, "no I wanna' be healthier", but there is that. Some men will be quite open about it, others are, will not admit it" (2:956-958).

This describes what participant two felt was an inherent strategy used by many men who body-build to avoid the thought that they are engaging in the activity for anything other than strength ideals. In essence he is suggesting that men avoid the emotional risk of reflecting upon the reasons for training.

The following excerpt was presented as a statement but serves to reveal the emotional fragility present within some men who body-build when self-reflection upon physique becomes a public exercise, even when the comments are presented as a joke;

"J: you could, with a few well chosen words, reduce a twenty stone guy into tears. I: How do you mean? J: Well you could just criticise his physique. Erm, very much so. He probably wouldn't cry in front of you, but he'd be really upset. Vanity is tremendous, you could say, a guy I know called Steve, "Hiya Steve, looking a bit fat". I could kill him, absolutely, might not be true, but that would absolutely..." (2:84-90)
Whilst this example appears to illustrate an element of insight into the emotional fragility of the participants, it may be that the insight only exists when reflecting upon others. When the participants have to conceive of themselves in a similar position, they appear to find it difficult to observe the same objective stance,

"I: So if someone says, who hasn't seen you for a while, and says you're looking, wow, you're looking good, what's that like?

T: Well, it's just, I don't know, I take it as a compliment, I suppose, and what I'm doing is a, is a means to an end, I suppose. Erm, I don't really think about it that much, you know, 'cos, sometimes it's just something you say in life, you know, right, but, er. No, I don't know.

I: What if it happened the other way, if someone kind of said, ah, you've kinda lost it.

T: I'd be concerned. I'd probably be concerned, yes, I don't know. Erm. It depends which, who it was. You know, erm, some friends I've got are really, you know, are real friends. But people who are just acquaintances, then, you know. But if it were the group that I knock about with down at the gym, who are, you know, wind-up merchants, you know, you can talk people into feeling ill and, you know, that sort of thing. So if it was them I'd take no notice, but if it was the other friends and they became concerned then you know, I'd, you know, I'd pass that."

(3:36-51)

Within this example one can see how compliments can be dismissed as politeness whilst anything perceived as negative can be seen to have a serious element. Despite this, participant three was able to discriminate between certain social groups and how they respond to each other, and the way in which this mediated his emotional response.
Insight into the mechanism of what appears to be a distorted cognitive view of others’ perception was evident in an extract from interview one;

P: *Errm, because in my head if you do that, then you’re showing, trying to show-off what you think you’ve got, and other people might be just saying “what is he doing that for, he’s not muscular or anything”*,
I: *So other people might almost be taking the piss saying.........*
P: *...yeah...*
I: *“look at him, he thinks he’s thinks he’s really...”*
P: *yeah, yeah. And I suspect that might be more to do with me rather than what necessarily other people think. (1:595-602)*

The final statement indicated an element of self-reflection on the emotional/cognitive processes influencing self-image.

4.2.1.2 Physical self

The sub-category of physical self refers to the narrative in which the participants engaged in self reflection and their physical status. All of the participants were what could be called highly muscular and very well defined, yet it is clear that this was not necessarily the concept that they had of themselves. The physical and emotional selves can be seen to be linked and an integral system of self-description that interact through negative interplay and also as a driving force behind the need to control the system. Negative body-image is a potent motivator for further training and was indicated by all participants;

*"P: ... well I put in a lot of effort and I still carry a mid-riff and I don’t consider myself to have a good physique at all."
I: *So personally you don’t think you’ve got a good physique?*
P: *No, slightly bulbous in certain areas, certainly don’t have a good physique"* (1:177-180)
“H: It’s just like, you’re never satisfied with yourself. It’s hard for you to be personally satisfied with yourself. I can’t imagine anybody who is satisfied with himself.” (5:359-361)

“I: I know what I think when I look at you. I wonder when you see yourself, what do you see?
S: I don’t exactly see it like looking, and think, skinny, and that. I have some days when I think, oh, I’m not doing bad, I’m alright. But when you gauge yourself, on your physicality and performance you’re always up, you can’t win can you, ‘cos you can’t measure yourself in that type of, I tend to. Now this is a good way. I value myself as a person on my physical performance and my physicality, and if my physicality is not good I’ve got no value as a person, and that’s how I value it. That’s clear, to me, if I’m very strong and I’m very well, then I’m a more confident person and a person that has a greater value, in terms of everything. If I’m physically weak, I went through a period where I was really weak and not doing very well, I wasn’t very well, then I know I go down in value.” (4:213-224)

Self-worth appeared to be linked to perception of shape and size, yet all of the participants talked about negating their own size at times. This sub-category is closely linked to the second order category of goals (section 4.2.2) and represents the dichotomy of the floating end-point, or ever shifting goals.

Whilst all of the participants dismissed the suggestion that they were highly muscular and well-built and most desired to gain bulk and definition, the issue of physique was complex. When context was added to the interview, the participants were able to recognise that they were bigger than the average man;

“T: I don’t see myself as a big guy, ‘cos the weighing scales prove I’m not, so...
I: I guess maybe another way of saying that is, do you think that you’re muscular?
T: Aah, not particularly, no. I’m not over the top, no, no. I’ve got definition, muscle definition.
I: I mean compared to most blokes?

T: If I compare most blokes of my age then I am muscular, yes, but I don't know many people of my age that do what I do, so...” (3: 403-409)

However, this statement was conditional, the implication being that he was muscular for his age, but not necessarily in terms of men in general. A more striking example of the conditional acceptance of muscularity is contained in interview one;

"I: How would you compare yourself to run-of-the-mill guys of your age? In terms of again, well we're talking about how you think about yourself.

P: In terms of people of my, I would, as.......somebody who has to work very hard............to be...where I am, which is probably slightly above what the average person in the street who doesn't do anything, but if they worked out the same as what I do they would be much bigger and have a much better physique than I would.” (1:166-173).

Insight into the dichotomy between recognising that one is muscular, yet dissatisfied with ones size and shape is summed up by participant five when he said;

"Put it this way I will never be satisfied. You will never find a bodybuilder who is satisfied. If you do, he's not a bodybuilder. He can't be a bodybuilder” (5:407-409).

This extract also begins to illustrate the powerful nature of the culture within bodybuilding that appeared to pervade all levels. This is addressed further in the section on gym culture (section 4.3).

4.2.2 Second level category: Goals

Whilst the second level category of self-description looked at the narrative used by participants to describe themselves in relation to their self-image, the category of
goals looked at what the participants described as their aim. As the discourse was bound up with thinking of themselves as men who body-build, the ways the men described their goals were generally around their physique and attainment in this respect, although there was also a recognition by some of goals outside of the body-building regime.

Two sub-categories were identified within the category of goals and these were: progression and attainment; and muscularity. However, overriding both of these was the concept of the unattainable floating end-point; goals were never achieved because they were always fluid, linked to prospective attainment rather than retrospective achievement. Progression and attainment had an aspirational quality and participant five described how he aspired to emulate Arnold Schwarzeneggar, Mr Universe;

“I saw Arnold, with chest and arms. I didn’t think about triceps, shoulders, all of your back and things like that. And then I started to look and thought, bloody hell, I ain’t got no back, I ain’t got no legs, I ain’t got that. And it started me thinking about doing those things.” (5:279-282)

Competition appears to play a part in the regulation of aspiration and motivation;

“I will break my back, I will do anything I can to beat it (other competitors). I’m not saying I can beat it, ‘cos as before you can’t beat them, and that’s life, but I will do everything and anything in my power to beat you, including cheating or anything.” (4:244-246)

Muscularity both general and specifically was described as a goal, particularly in respect of attaining a six pack, or highly defined stomach muscles with the absence of obvious fat around the stomach;
“I was always obsessed with getting a six-pack, I thought that was the ultimate to have, the six pack. I finally developed it about eight or nine years ago and I won't ever let go of it.” (2: 787-789)

Another stated goal was the reduction of perceived excess fat,

“Yeah, I’d say 8, 8 or 9%. Be a bit of hard work really.”, (1:730) referring to a goal of a body fat percentage of 8%.

A striking feature when talking about goals specifically was the notion of a floating end-point. A goal of improvement was mentioned, for instance;

“S: The truth is that I want to be big and strong as I can physically be.
I: How big and strong do you think that is? What could you be? Are you there?
S: No. Not yet. It's hard to define it. I suppose at the moment I'm floating in a no man's land.” (4:120-124)

The difficulty defining an acceptable goal was a consistent feature and appears to be linked to the notion of prospective analysis. All of the men talked about progression and attainment in relation to what they could achieve rather than what they had achieved and where they started from.

“I think there is a goal of bigness but I don’t think there is this idea of an end point or goal, it is just, to be bigger. So it’s sort of, as you do, it kind of shifts. The gap may decrease slightly but I don’t think that you would ever get there.” (1:525-528)

“You’re always thinking about being better, being bigger. You know when you’ve done the competition and you look back and you think next year, I want my physique like this a bit more.” (5:403-405).

If one considers the idea of manipulation of one’s body-image through body-building as a means of establishing control, then it is apparent that the nature of prospective analysis of goals and the floating end-point will leave the goal
unattainable and increase the dissonant emotions and cognitions described in self-reflection. Interestingly the participants appear to recognise the nature of this;

"you're never going to achieve your final destination, you've got to enjoy the journey because, you're never going to get there, the destination. Even if you get there it's not what you think it's going to be when you get there, anyway." (4:465-468)

Reflection on the nature of the end-point and goals indicates that the degree of drive and involvement in body-building is a factor in the extent that the floating end-point has an impact;

"I think it depends how important the training is for you. I said at the beginning that you can lose yourself in what you are trying to achieve, you don't look at where you were, you look at where you want to be" (2:735-738).

When thinking about factors preventing the men from achieving their goals, all of the men cited genetic make-up as the defining feature;

"it's obviously down to genetics and what you can do, I mean, there's people who never ever get to look like a body-builder proportions."(3:214-216)

"I: And how does that make you feel about yourself?
P: Erm....... envious of other people, the fact that they have better genetics than I necessarily do.
I: There's something about how, what?, that you would never genetically be able to aspire to...?
P: yeah, I'd never, yeah, there's, you know.... There's a lot, there's people out there who have a better base than what I have to go from. Which is what it is all about, really." (1:181-188)

Other factors cited as blocks to achieving goals also had an external focus, for instance the expense of supplements, although the over-riding factor described was genetics, in terms of general body shape, size and metabolism.
4.2.3 Second level category: Difference

The final second order category identified within the higher order category of self-image is difference. This related to how the participants positioned themselves as doing something that ordinary men do not do, serious body-building, in terms of requiring an element of dedication and sacrifice that most people would not be prepared to attempt. By positioning themselves as different in the terms expressed, the men were suggesting that only someone with control over themselves was able to undertake the endeavours required to achieve and maintain the optimum physique. This position contrasts starkly with that expressed in the category of goal orientation and serves to express the complex dichotomy underlying the actions of the participants.

"P: So now I enjoy it, it's... about me getting bigger... to an extent to see if I can, erm, I guess it's about being different as well.
I: I: Being different from...?
P: Errr, I never really thought about it, but there is something about being bigger than other people. Lifting more weight than other people. It's not a particularly aesthetic thing, I think, it is something about being different."(1:112-117)

"I don't know what the percentage is but probably about ninety percent of the population do that (find it too hard and give in), that is so easy and it's like no, I'm going to make the effort"(2:567-569)

Difference was described through sacrifice, whether physical or temporal involving training for up to six days a week or meticulous diet preparation.
“if you want to achieve anything then you have to accept there’s some pain involved in it. The more pain you can tolerate the better you can get. So, I’ve just always said to myself that I can take more pain than anybody else.” (4:110-112)

“I don’t enjoy preparing food and so it’s very difficult to eat properly unless you are prepared to put the time in preparing food.” (1:289-91)

The notion of discipline and sacrifice appears to be used as a means of justifying the attitude taken by these men who train as intensely as they do. It is closely linked to the higher order categories of gym culture and social pressures, both of which demonstrated perspectives on dedicated body-building.

4.3 Higher order category: Gym culture

Gym culture emerged as a higher order category; the gym was described as a retreat and place of safety and also a place where normality was perceived. It was in the gym that the men talked about the changes that they attempt to make to their bodies in an attempt to exert control. Whilst it initially appeared that the men were attempting to exert control over just their physique, evidence emerged to suggest that their bodies were extensions of themselves and that the gym became the place to sculpt both the physical and psychological self.

It was apparent that for the participants, the gym was a special place. They could be with like-minded people and there existed a very strong social element within the body-building fraternity. It presented itself as nurturing, a safe place to learn and observe and a place where knowledge and expertise could be passed on. When the gym culture is compared to other higher order categories, it appears to be a
place and culture where control is possible. However, all of the men recognised the fragile nature of the relationships that existed and the dangers of not being associated with the group. To this end, the gym culture was viewed as both safe and supportive but also as a vehicle for drawing people into accepting practices such as fat loss, food control (see section 4.5) and supplement use; to miss training is to lose ground and, as is apparent from the self-image category, the men already exhibited vulnerability. Whether the vulnerability is present before engaging in committed body-building was unclear, although there was evidence that it may be, for instance participant four’s description of the “little boy in a gorilla suit” (4:11-12). Figure 5 represents the relationships that emerged from the interviews.

![Gym culture diagram]

**Figure 5: Higher order category of Gym culture**

### 4.3.1 Second level category: Sharing Knowledge

All of the men found the gym to be a place of safety and understanding, somewhere where they could train with like-minded others who understood what they were doing and why. This appeared to be developmental process and all of the men described a socialisation process as a newcomer,

"I didn't know how to, how it all worked, but you start off doing press-ups and things like that. In a couple of years I started getting good gains from press-ups,
and then I started at the gym, after about four years. People at the gym used to say to me, oh you’ve got a good physique, you look as though you should be competing.” (5:271-274)

“I: How did you, where did you find out things like that from? (training)
P: Erm, kind of reading about it. Lots of template, err, approaches to doing muscular exercise. And sort of Men’s Health, Muscle and Fitness (magazines) and then also talking to people who are down the gym who do similar programmes.” (1:44-48)

The notion of shared experience appeared to be part of the social culture of dedicated body-builders. They progress from just seeking advice to giving advice;

“The gyms I go to, there are kids 16 years old and they’re dying. It’s just sad to see ‘cos they could make such good progress in a natural manner anyway, if they were given the correct advice, which is what I do with the people down here. So invariably what I tell people is, look, don’t do it (take steroids). There are a number of risks that you can take, but I just don’t think it’s worth for you to take it and besides, you’ve not even reached your true potential and, until people start doing that it’s just not worth it” (4:341-347)

Sharing advice and helping newcomers reinforces the notion of a supportive environment and is individually rewarding;

“And if I get a chance to talk to them, if I get a chance to move into their sort of circle, try and point them in the right direction. I think that’s what I enjoy most of all.”(3:545-547)

The men recognised the process of enculturation and described how openness and sharing added a social dimension to training;

“I’d trained at the gym for eight months so I knew a lot of the members and the staff, so working there was like a holiday, it was great.”(2:152-153).
4.3.2 Second level category: Supportive and safe environments

Whilst not the initial motivator, the social aspect of enjoyment of those around them was described as an important factor of the gym environment;

"but now while I'm doing it (training) that has become part of it, the whole aspect of being in a gym sort of friends in the gym, working with them... " (1:136-137)

There are specific relationships within the group that have significance;

"Apart from your training partner, the mate that you train with, he understands so you can chill with him. Other people don't understand." (5:341-342).

"I get enjoyment out of the two lads that I train with, and watching them develop, as much as doing it myself." (3:555-557)

The dedicated body-building culture allows men to look at each other without fear of reprobation, it provides a safe space for comparison and discussion of each others bodies. Equally important for the participants was the sense of the gym as a place of refuge, "it's where I go and escape" (1:104), where people understand what you are doing and why.

4.3.3 Second level category; Threat to self

Despite a narrative about the social support and camaraderie of the gym environment, all of the participants described a potentially pernicious aspect to the gym culture;

"A group of body-builders together and it's like a group of women. You know, they'll all be talking you know, 'his arms aren't looking very good, and his hamstrings, yeah look at them hams, yeah!" (2:92-94)
"I like to keep it (physique) in proportion. I don’t want to be like what we call in the trade what is called a carpet carrier" (2:793-794)

It appeared that the intracultural acceptability of looking at other men’s bodies led to a comparative process that links to self-image (section 4.2). Results discussed earlier indicated that individuals were able to see improvement in others but not necessarily in themselves. This accentuates the negative reflection process;

“S: Yes, I’d see them (other body builders) as super big and me not particularly big. So it would be, well, it’s a doubly whammy, that, isn’t it? But I know when I look at body-building magazines and that, well, I don’t get them anymore because they just depress me.” (4:203-205)

The method that seems to have developed to cope with this dissonance was to dismiss others in some way. For instance participant one talked about how he coped with others having bigger shoulders and trapezoid muscles by covertly suggesting that they only train these areas and only do so for aesthetic reasons, to show-off,

“there’s a couple of guys I train with who’ve got huge shoulders and huge traps (trapezoid muscles), erm but I don’t envy them as such, partly because I think ‘cos they train chest, shoulders and traps, and that’s kind of all they do and so for them it just seems to be about aesthetically having big shoulders which isn’t for me”. (1:193-197)

There is a recognition that the process of attributing progress in others to external means occurs within the body-building culture,

“if somebody sees someone bigger, they think oh my god, I bet he’s taking a lot of gear (anabolic steroids). It’s almost like, you ask any bodybuilder, he’s a big lad
Isn't he? Yes, I bet he's on a lot of gear. Things like that. They see it as a threat to them." (5:297-300)

This may serve to maintain the social cohesion of the group, the danger being that if one steps outside of the norms and becomes a target, you can...

"with a few well chosen words, reduce a twenty stone guy into tears." (2:84-85)

It can be seen that the role of the gym culture is multi-factorial. At once it can be seen as both a safe environment in which one is better able to control the feelings of uncertainty and dissonance whilst it can also be a place of threat and danger. There is a maintenance mechanism whereby new body-builders are supported and find somewhere they feel comfortable and understood. It is a place to escape the perceived general social pressure. Furthermore a feedback mechanism is evident, whereby the person passing on knowledge and guidance experiences inflated self-esteem.

The gym culture is also a place where the men talk about supplements, diet and body fat and get advice on steroid use, although steroids are a contentious area with conflicting opinions from the men. These findings will be presented in the higher category of Health Behaviour, Section 4.5.

4.4 Higher order category: Social pressures

The next higher order category has been termed social pressures and is shown in Figure 6. This refers to the wider social, public world separate from the gym environment. Analysis revealed that the men were aware of social pressures upon them, both as embodied beings and men generally and also as body-builders.
Social pressures

- Identification
- Social attributions
- Reactive behaviour

Positive social motivator

Internal view of external world of ideas

Figure 6: Higher order category of social pressures

Whilst the participants were clear about the prevailing pressures on men to conform to a socially derived masculine ideal, a second order category labelled identification, they appeared to be unsure whether they are able to meet this ideal, or what specifically society viewed it to be. This was expressed in terms of both concern about being too small or too big and how they coped with this. Social attributions is the label for this second order category, referring to the internal and external attributions the participants made about external, social perceptions of themselves as men and as body-builders. A number of sub-categories to social attributions were found and will be addressed. Of particular importance appeared to be the sub-category labelled positive social motivators indicating that positive self-esteem linked to ones body is a by-product of training, although appears to be mediated by internal doubts over self-image (see section 4.2).

A final second order category, as shown in Figure 6, relates to the impact the body-building lifestyle has upon the men’s personal and professional lives and has been termed reactive behaviour. Whilst this may appear to suggest that the behaviour is controlled, it is clear that reactions can occur without overt control. The reactive component may be more usefully understood as the men’s attempts to maintain
integrity as body-builders whilst also striving to be men within the normal social environment relating to relationships and employment.

As the second order and sub-categories are presented, links to the core category of control are highlighted. Overall, social pressures served to emphasise how the participants struggled to understand their position as men who body-build and society’s perception of this. On the one hand, body-building may be seen as a method of controlling the dissonance caused by this confusion. However, through the interactions with other areas identified as higher order categories, it is possible to see how the notion of control was constructed as in constant flux by these men.

4.4.1 Second level category: Identification of social pressures

The participants identified changing social ideas of masculinity as a major pressure on men;

“you’ll get guys now using erm, being much more concerned about their appearance, whereas ten years ago, it was like "(inaudible)…like a big poof", whereas now, like, you know male moisturisers, male this kind of thing, it’s suddenly, people are taking more care of themselves, are more aware, whereas there was this very much a masculine male kind of, there was a definite divide between male and female and I think now the whole society is very androgynous.” (2:679-685)

“Perhaps it’s just the way things are perceived these days, you know, the… probably the younger person is bombarded by this, this culture (of body-image).” (3:612-614)

There is an idea that body-building may fulfil an idea of the social pressure of the aesthetic, of looking good, as defined by the media;
“Yeah, and if I was fair my goal would be to look like someone on the front of Men’s Health magazine, even though I am aware that is never going to happen.” (1:532-534)

And also, whilst living up to the media ideal, they reflected back to earlier societal images of masculinity as a blend of power and looks;

“See they don’t fight anymore, we don’t go out and fight other people to win prizes or females or whatever. It’s no longer survival of the fittest or strongest, it’s kind of like whose the best looking, so I’ve got bigger muscles so therefore I’m going to be better.” (2:554-667)

However, whilst there was a recognition of men as embodied commodities within the social world, it was not perceived as a legitimate reason to train;

“For some people, motivation will be women. They want to look better for women. But they’re not body-builders. They might have started off training to look better for women, but after a bit they’ve got addicted and they want to be better. They start thinking about oh bloody hell, I look good, I think I should compete. Addiction turns to drive and determination.” (5:419-423)

Interestingly, it was not necessarily the aesthetic that was being negated but the use of body-building to conform to social expectations. This example illustrates the uncertainty of the role of body-building in society by the men that engage in it. Participant five seemed to be suggesting that social pressures linked to the aesthetic male body may have been a motivation for initial training, but that it become subsumed within the body-building culture (see section 4.3).

4.4.2 Second level category: Social attributions

The category of social attributions illustrates the way that the men reflected upon themselves in the social environment outside of the gymnasium. It demonstrates the underlying processes that appeared to regulate the men’s sense of self within
this area and the manner in which they utilised cognitive frameworks to attempt to understand and influence the wider social context. Whilst the sub-categories of *internal view of external world* and *external projection of ideas* reflected the conflict between understanding and confusion for the men, the final sub-category, *positive social motivator*, illustrates that the men were not immune to recognising positive factors relating to themselves as men who body-build in the social domain.

**4.4.2.1 Internal view of the external world**

Internal view of external world relates to reflections about the self and how participants took a position on others’ perception of them as men generally and as men who body-build;

"P: I would say that I wore clothes that, you know, I’d wear black long-sleeved tops. I would never wear a short-sleeved shirt or anything like that. I: Why? P: Errm, because in my head if you do that then you’re showing, trying to show-off what you think you’ve got, and other people might be just saying “what is he doing that for, he’s not muscular or anything”" (1:591-597)

This extract reflects concern in the public arena, not just about showing himself and receiving negative feedback about this, but concern that the reaction he would receive would suggest that he is not muscular. If this were to happen it would be a direct assault upon his self-integrity about which there is already uncertainty (see section 4.2). therefore, in an attempt to control the predicted situation the participant does not wear revealing clothes, or at least does not think that he does, although he commented that friends say he sometimes wears tight clothing;

"P: I wouldn’t wear clothes that revealed...pause......well people say that I do wear tight clothes, ha, ha”. (1:590-591)."
There appears to be a dual mechanism that led to the men playing down compliments, of being unclear of their meaning. Whilst accentuating negative comments, particularly from friends not involved in body-building;

"I: So if someone says, who hasn't seen you for a while, and says you're looking, wow, you're looking good, what's that like?
T: Well, it's just, I don't know, I take it as a compliment, I suppose, and what I'm doing is a, is a means to an end, I suppose. Erm, I don't really think about it that much, you know, 'cos, sometimes it's just something you say in life, you know, right, but, er. No, I don't know."(2:35-40)

"I: What if it happened the other way, if someone kind of said, ah, you've kinda lost it.
T: I'd be concerned. I'd probably be concerned, yes, I don't know. Erm. It depends which, who it was. You know, erm, some friends I've got are really, you know, are real friends."(2:41-44)

Participant two reflected that part of the difficulty for many men is admitting why they are training; in his opinion body-building was about the aesthetic;

"J: But they won't admit that they look good. That means then, like I say, that they are training for pure aesthetics and that they look in the mirror all of the time."(2:762-764).

This suggests an unwillingness to accept the activity of body-building as an overt reaction to social influence, but the evidence suggests that aesthetics was a strong motivator. Therefore there existed a tacit acceptance of the social mediation of their chosen activity. For instance the balance of muscles was important;

"I look at my body, comparing myself, do I look in proportion. Looking at the balance, have I got more triceps than biceps?"(5:366-367)

Where balance is missing, it meets with approbation;
"He's got a huge chest, huge shoulders and arms, but he's got a waist of about, a narrow waist and narrow legs erm, so he's just got like this inverted triangle on top of his little waist and the reason why he is 'cos he's also got trendy Mohican pointy hair, so he's sort of like triangle on top of triangle and it just doesn't look right, you know. The guy is a big guy." (1:222-227)

There is also a perception of public expectation of men who body-build;

"Women, most women feel intimidated about it. They think oh my god look how big he is. Oh if I had an argument with him he'd probably kill me. Things like that. And it's you, like, you're a minder. Once they get to know me, it's like oh my god, you're nothing like I expected you to be." (5:459-462)

Again this illustrates a negative view of how very muscular men are perceived, although participant five coped differently with this than participant one. Participant five chose to reject the importance of perceived public opinion;

"Oh yes, you get a lot of different reactions. It does seem. What can I say? It doesn't matter what people think. If people said to me 'oh you're horrible, you've got a horrible physique.' I'm gonna' please myself no matter what you think, you know what I mean? My bird says to me, 'oh your getting too big now, you don't want to get any bigger', I'll say, 'well if I'm too big for you, you can always leave. I'm not training to make you happy, I'm training to make myself happy'." (5:465-470)

4.4.2.2 External projection of ideas

The sub-category of external projection of ideas linked very closely to the previous sub-category of internal view of the external world and illustrates how the men coped with their internal perceptions of what others think outside of the world of body-building.
Comparative processes emerged as a major factor, much like the comparisons of physique that occur within the gym culture but the participants described physique comparisons in the wider social context. Analysis revealed that the men did not think of themselves as bigger generally than men who do not body-build;

"No I don't feel big. I feel like everybody else." (5:434)

"you look back over a period of six months and find I have made some improvements here. Not, not visually, probably, you know, really. You don't tend to, I don't tend to see myself changing that much." (3:28-31)

However, whilst the men may not have thought of themselves as big, they recognised that they may appear so to the wider public;

"But I can notice people look at me sometimes. People look at me and think,' oh my god look at him'. Things like that, I think that gives it away.
I: What do you mean, look at him? What do you think they're thinking when they?
H: I think they think, 'look at that freak'." (5:434-438)

Once again, participant five coped with this by negating the importance of the reactions of the wider social world.

The results appear to indicate that the external representations projected internal ideas held about the self. The rejection of positive comments and opinions reflects the internal uncertainty about their current condition. Even where opinion is sought there is doubt about whether the feedback is accurate;

"I've said to Sue (partner), 'do I look alright?'. I haven't got no shirt on, or I haven't got any clothes on, are things working? What I'm doing, is it working? And she'll say 'yes, you always look good anyway'. You know, so, she might tell you a different story herself, I don't know." (3:622-625).
4.4.2.3 Positive social motivator

Whilst the analysis suggests a set of social and internal interactions that led to negative self-image, there was evidence that the men were able to take pride in their activity and the reflection of the wider social world. All of the participants talked about feeling validated when others noticed change, even if they had not recognised the change initially;

“generally, I don’t think that people would identify me as being, “oh look at him, he’s a big guy”, or he’s got, well not big guy because I know I’ve not got a big frame but erm, “he’s got a lot of muscles”. I don’t think people would identify me as that.

I: But when somebody does, as they did...

P: hmmm... then it’s surprising and it’s kind of nice ‘cos you put a lot of time and effort in.” (1:159-165)

“You’re different in a way that other people often aspire to.” (1:130)

“I wouldn’t say I find it attractive but I assume that women will find it attractive. Virility and things like that.”(2:46-47)

“I: say you were down the pub and what have you, did you feel bigger? and....

J: Yeah, yeah definitely..

I: And did it seem like people were noticing?

J: Yeah

I: How was that?

J: It was definitely a feeling of self-confidence,”(2: 618-624)

Whilst these examples of positive social motivators may appear to be protective factors from poor self-image, earlier results indicated that internal cognitive factors were far greater determinants of perception. Nevertheless they indicate that it was possible for the men to receive compliments from people outside the body-building world and for them to be accepted with positive affects.
4.4.3 Second order category: Reactive behaviour

The reactive component emerged as the interaction between the men as body-builders and as people who have jobs and engage in relationships. It describes the conflict between attempting to maintain their integrity as body-builders, men concerned with the external expression of themselves, whilst striving to control the immediate social environment.

Participant five described body-building as his lifestyle choice (5:484), a situation engineered to remove external influences upon his training schedule where possible. As a competitive body-builder he had specific targets that he felt would be compromised if he had a relationship outside of body-building;

"H: When I'm competing I don't go out clubbing, nothing like that, and I won't see my woman much either. I'll keep it to a minimum.
"I: I was wondering about the impact it has on your social life?

H: It does have a big impact. Apart from your training partner, the mate that you train with, he understands so you can chill with him. Other people don't understand. Women don't understand I; they don't want you to diet. So most of the time I always try not to be seen with a woman around competing. I try to keep away from them." (5:337-345)

All of the men described the problems associated with their training schedules. Participants one and three had jobs around which they had to fit training. Participant three described reducing his working hours to, "get more time at home and go to the gym" (3:265). Participants two and four work in physical training environments and have engineered their lives to do so. Participant two described how moving from a well paid job to working in a gymnasium and taking a reduction in wages, was justified to facilitate his own training (2:141-152).
Participant four had always worked in a gymnasium environment although reflected that the work and training have become differentiated;

"when I'm working, I'm just completely disassociated. I don't train when I'm working, it's separate. I have to have it separate otherwise, people think if you work in a gym you train all day. You go and look at people that work in gyms; they don't, they can't, they'd get sick of it. I have specific, special times for me when I train, and I'm just training and that's it. And then I have a work time, I don't do any exercise at all. It's a job, just a job." (4:454-460).

Participant two, four and five were all undertaking further education, participant four and five saw this as a professional safety-net;

"I'm studying to be a wotsit, you know what I mean, computer networks, but at the end of the day, that's always my back-up plan. I wanted something there to fall back onto." (5:492-494).

Although participant four viewed education as a way of getting out of the body-building world in the long-term, current plans were to return to competition (4:471-477)

In addition to training schedule, training fatigue was described as impacting upon the participants' social life;

"most women, they want to see you every day, and I'm tired after training and I don't want to go and see them, and before I meet them, I say to them what type of lifestyle I've got and they say, "oh it's all right. But after a month or so, you know what I mean, 'oh, you don't come and see me no more, you've got another woman'. I'm thinking I wish I had time!" (5:482-487)

Three of the men were in relationships at the time of being interviewed and all of their partners trained, although none of them were body-builders. Participant five (above 445-449) felt that it was difficult for people to understand the pressures upon men who body-build. Participant two illustrates the totality of this;
"I'd start training, start making progress, and then, instead of actually fancying going out for a beer or a meal, I wasn't bothered because I'd seen the progress in my training." (2: 209-211)

The relational aspect of social life appears to be another area in which the men attempted to control, either through negation (Participant 5) or through finding someone who could share time training with them. Where this was not evident, relationships could become problematic leading to external factors being perceived as controlling. Participant two questioned whether there was a link between the breakdown of his marriage and training (2: 155-168) and participant one described a training partner who was experiencing relationship difficulties because of the time investment in training and food preparation.

4.5 Higher order category: Health beliefs and behaviours

The category of Health Beliefs and behaviours, as with the others, attempts to describe how the men attempted to exert control over aspects relating to health, diet and training in an attempt to maximise their body-building efforts. It also looks at reflections the men had upon this behaviour as it is clear that they recognised the possible damaging impact it has, and this includes the use of anabolic steroids, food supplements and restrictive eating.

![Health beliefs and behaviours diagram]

Figure 7: Higher order category of Health beliefs and behaviour
Analysis revealed that it is possible to divide health beliefs and behaviours into three second order categories: training; physique versus fitness; attitude to and use of enhancers, i.e. supplements and anabolic steroids; and food regulation.

In line with the other higher order categories, health beliefs and behaviour had no primacy within the findings. What emerged was an interactive multi-factorial model that operates on many levels. However, this category could have prominence in that some of the behaviours may have similarities with expressions of human distress recognised as addictive behaviours and eating disorders. Therefore the results could have particular relevance to health professionals. Nonetheless, dominance in terms of the model that has emerged is not implied. This point will be further explored in the discussion (Section 5).

4.5.1 Second order category; training – physique or fitness

Results presented thus far have shown an aesthetic motivation for the participants, although this may be marginalized or denied. Participants talked about health considerations relating to training;

“There’s so much you can find to do, you know, all these things to explore, and the benefits are, you know, looking after your body, which, at the end of the day, that’s how I look at it, that’s how I see it, giving myself a healthy lifestyle.” (3:473-476)

“I am a stone and a half heavier, I have got a lot more fat around my mid-riff but I am aware that I look better for it, in terms of just healthier” (1: 256-258)

Despite the recognition that added weight as body fat made him look healthier, participant one was demonstrating a dissonance repeated by other participants;

“you’ve got a balance between fitness and muscularity” (2: 45)
Participant four recognised that aesthetics take primacy over health (4: 297-300). He talked about many men who get trapped into training because they see themselves as smaller than they actually are and reflected upon the potentially unhealthy atmosphere of a body-building environment "I don't know how healthy a thing it is" (4: 435-436). Reaction to injuries suggested that resting injured areas was problematic, although some did it and concentrated on other parts of the body whilst others justified training the injured part on health grounds;

"H: At the moment I've got like, an injury, so I'm just taking it easy. I've got a shoulder injury. It's on the verge of recovery, so I've still got to take the easy run but I can't hurt it any more.
I: So are you resting it entirely at the moment?
H: No, no I'm just going lightly, just to put blood into it and just pushing out all toxins in that area. Push, push blood into that area. Keep all the bad blood out that circulates that area. It heals quicker". (5: 57-63)

Despite talking about healthy training, it is clear that the men recognised this as a problematic concept, perhaps not overtly, but they talked about the tension between being healthy and gaining muscle bulk.

Participants acknowledged that there are sacrifices to make when training (see section 4.2.3) and it appeared that health may be one of them. Participant four recognises this in extreme body-building, and in body-builders who take anabolic steroids;

"I think there are consequences of maintaining such a huge muscle mass, and when you go beyond the body's kind of structural capacity I think you're looking at, kind of, cardiovascular and musculoskeletal problems." (4: 329-332)

However, he advocated that the individual has a choice about whether to risk their health for physique;
"S: Yes. I suppose my opinion of it, when you're as good as Trevor, yes, you can go for it. One in a million people can get like that and if you're going to be a Mr Peabody who's got like a massive chest and shoulders and just wants to go on the beach, why risk your liver and your cardiovascular system. But when all's said and done, it's up to that individual". (4: 335-339).

4.5.2 Second order category: Supplements and steroids, use and attitudes

All of the participants had an in-depth knowledge of the biochemistry associated with muscle growth and this was gained through body-building magazines and the gym culture (section 4.3). This category represents attempts to exert control over what all of the participants described as their goal; muscle growth, despite the recognition that this is a floating, ever-changing, unattainable goal (see section 4.2.2).

There was a recognition that the chemical reactions required to develop muscle necessitated large quantities of certain elements, such as protein. To eat the amount of protein required was difficult in terms of bulk but also because the body-builders described eating as an anhedonic exercise (see section 4.5.3), although the causal mechanism for this was unclear. Food supplements allowed the individual to increase their mineral and nutrient content as required in the form of a drink and are described as a convenience food;

"I: How did the supplement, do you still use supplements?
J: Yeah, I do yeah
I: How do they fit into your general diet?
J: they're convenience foods..." (2: 327-330).

It appeared that supplements operated differently some for people than others. Therefore the usual mechanism of knowledge exchange within the body-building
culture was only effective relative to similar reactive biochemistries. Participants described a developmental process to understanding their own bodily reactions to supplements;

"You can completely blind yourself with different types of proteins and things that there are on the market, but, of course, you know, I've tried a few, stuck to the few that I like, the ones that I get results with, and gone in six month sort of blocks, got the results, not the results that they say that you're going to get, but got results" (3:306-311).

As knowledge grew and body-building became more serious, the range of supplement knowledge and use increased and developed from being a food supplement to one aimed at speeding muscle repair (1:377) or metabolising fat more quickly (3:748-752). It appeared that the possibility of gaining muscle more readily motivates the men to try more supplements, despite recognising the potential consequences;

"I used to see supplements, I used to pick the one with the muscley guy on the front, and think, oh yeh I'll take two of these tablets and wonder whether I'd wake up after." (5:315-317)

"P: I've used creatine when I was running, a lot.
I: You say used, in the past tense,
P: Yeah, I haven't for a long time. It doesn't do your kidneys a lot of good.
I: Is that why you stopped?
P: Errr, yeah, I think it was because I was getting pains in my kidneys, so it er, but it's good stuff." (1:379-384)

There is also a recognition that supplement use has a cost implication;

"I'm not sure about, I keep looking at these, these supplements that say that they burn fat and things. I keep looking at them and thinking, shall I have a crack at that? But, they're expensive. 80 quid a month." (3:742-745)
Financial constraints interact with mechanisms reported in other categories to increase the feeling of dissonance;

“\textit{I’ve got massive results with supplements. Unfortunately, supplements cost so much.}” (3: 303-304).

This dichotomy increased the feeling that external forces were thwarting the goal and that control was being wrested away from the individual. Participant five described himself as fortunate to be sponsored by a supplement manufacturer.

Whilst supplement use is an accepted activity viewed as merely speeding up a natural process, the use of anabolic steroids elicited differing opinions and none of the participants volunteered information about whether they were or had ever taken any.

Steroids were viewed as seductive for men who body-build, whatever their position on using them;

“\textit{I: Do you get many people asking about steroids?} \\
\textit{J: Everyone wants to know about steroids.} \\
\textit{I: Do they?} \\
\textit{J: Yeah, secretly, everyone is fascinated by steroids.}” (2: 830-833)

There is a perception that steroids offer immediate gratification (1: 445-447) and are associated with hard-core body-building (2: 973-4). This implied that steroid use may differentiate types of dedicated body-builders, much like body-building competitions; there are ‘clean’ competitions with no steroid use and open competitions where any substance can be used.

Only one participant felt that steroid use was unacceptable and he suggested that to take steroids was to become obsessional about body-building (1: 438-9). Four of
the other participants felt that steroid use should be a personal choice, recognising that if the drive for muscle growth was strong enough they would use them;

"You know at least these guys, I think, I don't have a problem with them in the slightest, and I must admit that if I actually decided that I wanted to, for some strange reason wake-up one morning and think that I want to be thirty stone, I'd contact a few friends and I'd be taking steroids, because I know naturally I'm only about eleven and a half, twelve stone, naturally." (2: 917-922).

Participant five felt that anabolic steroid use was acceptable if used properly. By this it was meant that one has the knowledge about what can be achieved and how to manage them. He acknowledged that long-term use can be damaging, both physically and psychologically but again cited lack of knowledge as probable cause for this (5: 542-560).

It was unclear to what extent anabolic steroid use existed within this sample of men, if at all. However, it was clear that they had a position on its use that suggested that to begin using anabolic steroids is a move toward greater emersion in the body-building culture. There was a sense for some of the participants that far from helping someone control their self-image, they were more likely to relinquish it with steroid use. Participant five acknowledged that this could be the case without proper knowledge.

4.5.3 Second order category: food regulation

One of the most striking features of the interviews was the relationship all of the men had with food. It was viewed as both the fuel for development and the enemy causing fat. Meticulous calculations and preparation were undertaken to attempt to
mediate these differing tensions but it was clear that all of the men experienced what they described as episodes of losing control of their eating.

4.5.3.1 Diet

All of the participants described their relationship with food as a vital component of their training schedule. For instance, participant five described his training routine thus;

"I train four days a week, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays I don't train, Thursdays and Fridays, weekends I don't train. On Mondays I basically do legs, Tuesdays I do chest and triceps, a day of rest, Thursdays I do calves, shoulders and arms, Fridays I do biceps. That's mainly my training, and I eat six times a day. Mainly I have eggs and oats and then for dinner I'll have tuna. I eat every three hours, and mid-afternoon I'll have a rest from training, and I'll have my tea which will be chicken and rice and then I'll train at 6, then after training, straight away, I'll have a protein shake, and before bed I'll have eggs and oats again. Basically I eat that every day." (5: 3-11).

He continued by explaining that he eats the same food at the same time every day except Sunday, which was reserved as his binge day (see below). Controlling nutritional intake was viewed as problematic from the perspective of training;

"The nutrition is the most (important aspect of body-building), I would think, is probably, just as an amateur, is probably 75 to 80% of the problem you've got, is nutrition. And it's expensive, and it's, its erm, time-consuming."(3: 118-120)

The temporal aspects of nutritional control were integrated into the participants’ lives (4: 55-68) and became a dominant theme;

"If I know that I've not got a lecture then I still have get up to get my food out, right? If I wake up about 12 o'clock I'm just too... So I've got to wake up about 9 o'clock at the latest every day. No later than that." (5: 79-82)
Eating becomes regimented and ritualised;

"you've just got to keep your metabolism kicking along, keep it going, eating everything so you're body's like clockwork, expecting food at that time so you've got to give it at that time." (5: 23-25).

All of the men described this need to control nutritional intake and all described the process of meticulous preparation (see 5: 3-11 above), to the extent of suspicion of food not personally prepared;

"I always cook in my room myself, so I always know what's gone in it. So if anything, if anybody else has cooked I'm always dubious. If they've put too much sodium in it, too much of this in it, too much of that in it." (5: 103-106)

"See I'm a lorry driver by trade, so I carry all my food with me, 'cos, you know, greasy spoons don't do protein. So I take everything that I need, so I have a fridge in the cabin, pre-pack everything at home the night before if I'm on a two-day trip I take two days provisions with me and that." (3: 122-126)

The element of suspicion was mediated by the need to control nutritional intake. However, this became a difficult process to control as eating became an anhedonic activity;

"I think a lot of them (fellow body-builders) don't really, aren't really into food actually, it's sort of, the guy that I am particularly thinking of he says that he'd quite happily eat the same thing day in day out, it's not something that particularly interests him. He quite often comes and says, he'll come when he's training and say he's sick to the back teeth of eating 'cos he has to eat every two hours and he's bored with eating." (1: 347-352)

Whilst this type of behaviour seemed to place the locus of control into the hands of the body-builder, it appeared that doubts existed over the foods that they allowed themselves in the form of distorted cognitions around eating;
"you've got to eat in three hours, and my girlfriend's not bothered. I mean, if I don't eat I'll wither away. Which is like a ridiculous thing to be, 'cos obviously you wouldn't, it wouldn't matter if you missed for a few hours, but if I don't eat. I eat 9, 12, 3, 6, 9. If I don't start, or have a meal ready for that time I start to get panicky, start worrying about it." (4: 64-68)

This type of concern has been noticed in fellow body-builders (1: 364-365; 4: 63-64);

"it's a bit like shooting yourself in the foot really because you become obsessed with the calories, but you don't know enough about your metabolism to know how many calories you want. And it rules your life." (2: 462-465)

4.5.3.2 Attitude to body fat

One of the most striking aspects of the interviews was the participants' views on body fat. All had or have had a desire, a drive to reduce their percentage body fat to levels that they recognised were considered by society as being unhealthy. Fat was viewed as an external expression of failure, therefore training controlled the amount of body-fat;

"I have to (train)....because if I didn't I'd be a blimp" (1: 34)

However, there is evidence of distorted beliefs about weight gain;

"I'm doing more exercise 'cos I'm trying to burn a little bit of fat off, that I think I've put on over the last six months, 'cos I've had a period of putting on weight, in the last six month.
I: And that's putting on weight as ...
T: Hopefully muscle, as muscle, but er and I do have a fat monitor" (3: 161-165)

Despite recognising that the weight gain was likely to be in the form of muscle, participant three also held a belief that it may be present as fat. It appears that this possibility was strong enough to cause him to attempt to lose weight, despite the lack of evidence of excess body fat.
Conflicting cognitions about the relationship of fats to health and physique were apparent (e.g. 1: 296-302);

"so that's one of the things (a six-pack- highly developed stomach muscles) that stops me from putting a lot of weight on or mass, because sometimes you have to over-eat to such an extent that you put fat on as well as muscle tissue". (2: 790-792)

There was a recognition of the distorted thinking around body fat and associated health implications;

"Years ago I'd have been really upset if I'd had a bad work-out, or if I thought I'm getting fat, or very controlled and very, erm, very much trying to control my shape and things like that. Interesting enough about, about fifteen years ago I went through quite a severe training period. I knew nothing about nutrition, total beginner, and I was almost bulimic. Really, really...I can see how it works because I trained that hard and I nearly made myself sick one day after I had something to eat, 'cos I just didn't want the calories, but I realised what I was about to do. It kind of hit me quite hard and I didn't train or anything for about six months afterwards" (2: 66-74)

However the examples presented indicate that insight was not sufficiently powerful to interdict the potentially harmful behaviour.

For most of the participants the goal was to remove the external appearance of body fat. For participant five the goal was to reduce his percentage body fat to 3-4% to coincide with competitions (5:219-220). He achieved this over a highly structured twelve-week period reducing his body fat by ten percent (5:202-203).

This was a highly controlled behaviour, and all of the participants had ways of monitoring their body-fat;
"I judge myself by my clothes and when my clothes become tight and uncomfortable I think right, I'm not buying any more, I'm going to lose some weight." (2: 195-197)

Body-fat calculations are routinely made, either from general body weight or using dedicated fat monitors, but visible physique is the most widely used and trusted monitor;

"As long as I can see my ab outlines I don't have a problem. But when my ab (abdominal muscles) outlines start going, then I need to cut back." (5: 215-216)

The results, however indicated that personal perception is multi-factorial and not necessarily the most accurate guide.

4.5.3.3 Loss of control

The participants described allowing themselves episodes of unstructured eating. For instance weekends were set aside for two participants;

"I: Do you get the feeling sometimes that, to hell with it, and you know, you might have curry or...?  
T: Oh no, yes, yes, definitely. I'm not, I mean, everything you read, every literature that you read on muscle and things. I mean my bible is the most unfitness monthly, and it says, you know, give yourself a week, er, one day a week where it's pizza and chips, or have a beer, you know.  
I: And are you quite happy with that?  
T: Oh yeh. Yeh. I mean, my weekends is playtime, you know." (3: 235-242)

This does not appear problematic for this man, although he cites age as a potential mediating factor, as did participant two; both are in their early forties. However, there was a recognition that when they were younger, this type of behaviour may have caused them distress;
"I used to train probably for about three months like an idiot, then my body just packed in, I'd get err, cold, flu, I'd feel crap, not train for two or three weeks or I'd binge on food 'cos I'd been trying to hold my food, not eat food and things like that. And you kind of binge eat then because you're starving and things like that."

The younger participants, participants one and three, described the psychological distress they experienced around food, either missing a meal (4: 74-78) or a feeling that the diet was not right (1:287- 291). Participant five minimised these conflicts by controlling his diet as strictly as other factors connected to his training, either by controlling them or totally rejecting; in this case, rejecting any foods he was not familiar with and controlling binges.

It is clear that all of the men have difficulties with their health beliefs and behaviours to varying degrees and that these are linked to controlling physique but, unless diet is highly regimented there is a perception that food becomes another factor that oscillates in and out of control.
5.0 Discussion

This section discusses control as the core emergent category in relation to male body image in male body-builders before addressing the clinical implications of the results. Critical reflections are made of the current study with suggestions for further research.

5.1 Discussion of findings

Control as a central theme appeared to derive from role confusion regarding the participants' personal and perceived societal expectations of them as men. In attempting to exert nominal control over certain aspects of the participants' being, whether that is physique, diet, training schedule etc., a reflexive control mechanism emerged. It was typified by a cycle of attempted control followed by a loss, perceived or actual, of control, resulting in further efforts to control the environment. As a result of this cycle, the participants' experienced cognitive dissonance and distress around a number of factors, particularly the interaction between physique, health and diet.

The tension between the male as strong and dominant appeared to be contrasted with the aesthetic quality of the male body. Muscularity as the male ideal is not a new phenomenon (Jefferson, 1998). However, masculinity is in a state of transition (Henwood et al, 2002) from being portrayed as an expression of sacrifice, of bonding and an expression “of physical manhood” (Cashmore, 1998) to one of the embodiment of the masculine form (Corson & Andersen, 2002; Pope et al, 2001). The results from this study indicate ways in which men are attempting to control their environments through sculpting their bodies and taking a position upon this activity. The current study finds support for the growing evidence that
men are becoming more concerned with the aesthetic of the male body rather than the function (Grogan & Richards, 2002: Pope et al, 1999).

The participants in the present study explicated the tensions surrounding the changing face of masculinity; they exhibited awareness of their uncertainty and attempted to understand this through positioning themselves as different to average men. This may be an accurate analysis. Mangweth et al (2001) compared males who body-build with a control sample and a sample of males with an eating disorder and found a number of differences between the body-building group and the controls. They found higher rates of general distress, with particular focus on body-image and eating for the body-builders compared with the control group.

In the current study, the participants differentiated themselves from other men through descriptions of both sacrifice and discipline, an expression that to engage in body-building one needs to exert a high degree of control over many areas, something that the participants felt was a unique activity. However, many sportspeople attempt to control their diet and training schedules and these have inevitable consequences for the social environment. Therefore, the question arises, were the participants in this study correct to position themselves as different?

Dissatisfaction with body-image has been shown to be prevalent across Western male populations (e.g. Cash, 2002; Grogan, 1999; Pope et al, 2000). Evidence suggests that it is greater still in males who engage in activities to specifically gain muscle (e.g. Mangweth et al, 2001; Olivardia et al, 2000). More recently Lantz, Rhea & Cornelius (2002) found that the features of muscle dysmorphia (e.g. Pope, Olivardia & Philips, 2000; Olivardia, 2001) were significantly more characteristic of body-builders than power-lifters. This adds credence to the concept of difference found in the present study.
Gym culture emerged as a major category in this study but is not widely considered in the current literature concerning body-image and male body-builders. The present study found that men experienced the gym environment as a place of security where they could concentrate on body-building with like-minded others. Similar findings were presented by Pope, Phillip's and Olivardia (2000), although the data was not collected or analysed in a systematic manner.

Grogan and Richards (2002) found that peer pressure had an important role in male discourses about their body. However, they only found this to be a factor in sixteen year old boys, not in older males. Whereas the results from the present paper indicate that social pressures, including that from peers, had an important role in how the participants' situated themselves in relation to both behaviour and self-reflection. For instance the participants described the gym culture as a place of comparison and encouragement, the role of peers was described as one of the most important relationships for nearly all of the men. The discourse around general societal pressures indicated that perceived attitudes of non-body-builders was confused, the participants’ were unsure what society thought of them. This served to push the men further toward the apparent safety of the gym environment.

The findings in section 4.4.2.1 and section 4.4.2.2, social pressures internal view of external world and external projection of ideas may indicate ways in which cognitive factors shape the participants’ perception of the outer social world. There was evidence of selective attention for negative messages about ones physique and an idea that men who body-build are seen as different from ordinary men. It appears that the participants’ had a sense that they are viewed as either small, and attempt to hide their bodies, or as too big. The men’s understanding of the public perception of their bigness is one of ridicule, either that they are freaks
Avoidance of the social situation was one of the most used coping strategies, either through covering up or engaging less frequently in social activities. However, as discussed above, this behaviour appears to serve to push the men further into the body-building culture with the associated potential problems.

Participants' health beliefs and behaviours (Section 4.5) were clearly designed to facilitate the growth of muscle. However dissonance was obvious, particularly around diet and supplement use.

The findings in the present study indicated that physique was a primary concern for the participants. This adds support to recent research with male body-builders (Choi, Pope & Olivardia, 2002) and presents a possible dichotomy in male body image perception. Unlike the current study and Choi et al (2002), Grogan & Richards (2002) talked to a general population of males and found health concerns cited as most important, and physique to be a minor factor in male body image perception. It may be that risky behaviour in terms of diet and supplement use is part of the culture of body-building and therefore more likely to be prevalent in this population as opposed to the wider, general population of males.

All of the participants in the current study reported a difficult relationship with food. Much of the discourse described it functionally, as a fuel. Most participants described an anhedonic relationship to eating. Anderson et al (1995) implied similar concerns in a population of competition body-builders. They found problems with food regulation, binge-eating and diet in general with 67% of their sample being described as terrified of fat. A fear of fat was also found in the current study, dissonance was evident when the participants talked about physique and fat. They appeared to recognise that they looked better when heavier but felt
that fat compromised the general integrity of self. Fat concerns and difficulties around eating were evident in all participants, Pope, Phillips and Olivardia (2000) suggested this to be far more common in men than is currently found in the research literature, particularly within a group of men who body-build (Pope et al, 2000; Pope et al, 1993).

None of the participants in this study revealed using anabolic steroids. Current research however indicates that usage is widespread in body-building populations (e.g. Wroblewska, 1997) and it may be that the participants in the current study did not feel comfortable about admitting using steroids. What is clear is that diet supplement use is widespread. The discourse used by the participants suggested that they must use supplements to continue muscle growth. Whilst all appeared to have a good knowledge of biochemistry, most participants described experimenting with different supplements. Again dissonant feelings emerged. At times, supplements were blamed for not having the desired effect, whilst at other times the participants situated the blame internally, thereby locating the locus for failure within themselves. This mechanism appeared to promote further experimentation with supplements and may be part of a larger cycle of negative feedback intrinsically linked to feelings of control loss.

5.2 Clinical implications

Many of the papers concerned with muscle dysmorphia have suggested that the symptoms associated with this problem (e.g. Olivardia, 2001) are not experienced by general populations of men who train with weights (e.g. Phillips, 2001). However, the findings of the current study indicates that the constellation of factors associated with poor male body-image may be far more prevalent in a wider population than has been identified.
The results from the current paper indicates that the function of training with weights needs to be considered, a point made by Olivardia (2002), although he failed to make the distinction between body-building and other types of weight-training. Much of the research on muscle dysmorphia has also failed to distinguish the functionality of the process of training with weights (e.g. Mangweth et al, 2001). Lantz et al (2002) has demonstrated that the symptoms of muscle dysmorphia are significantly more likely to be found within a population of men who train with weights to improve their physique than men who train with weights for other reasons (e.g. sporting competition). However, the results from the current research suggested that the participants felt that training for reasons other than physique could lead to some men abandoning sports training and becoming body-builders. This suggests that the number of men experiencing distress because of body-image concerns may be under-estimated, and could be exacerbated in some because of an interaction of factors including body-building itself.

Of particular note in the current paper was the concerns expressed by the participants around body fat and physique. The primary tools used to attempt to exert control over these worries involved diet and training. Diet regulation and exercise are also the main control mechanisms used by people with eating disorders (Garner & Garfinkle, 1997); however, exercise and diet are also used by the general population to control weight, therefore, using these methods alone are not predictive of psychological difficulties. A key feature in eating disorders is cognitive distortions (e.g. Cooper, Todd & Wells, 2000; Garner & Garfinkle, 1997). Whilst the participants in the present study demonstrated insight into their perception of their bodies this did not stop them having problematic ideas about excess body fat and, for some, thoughts about poor physique.
Muscle dysmorphia has been classified in a number of ways. Initially it was thought to be an analogue of anorexia nervosa (Pope et al., 1993). Similarities with eating disorders continued to be proposed (Olivardia, 2000), although it has been argued to be closer to body dysmorphic disorder (Olivardia, 2002; Phillips, 2001). Some researchers have made a case for muscle dysmorphia to be considered a form of obsessive-compulsive disorder (Chung, 2001); however, the growing consensus is that the term muscle dysmorphia should be a diagnostic category in its own right (Olivardia, 2002), situated within the constellation of body dysmorphic disorders (e.g. Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000).

This paper will make no claims for one diagnostic entity over another. Whilst classification may stimulate debate and research, it is arguable whether diagnosis offers more to a client suffering with this constellation of symptoms than a person-centred approach. Clearly categorisation involves having cut-off points for diagnosis with subsequent implications for possible treatment. The current research paper indicates that the label of muscle dysmorphia may help orientate professionals and clients alike toward an understanding of body-image distress experienced by male body-builders. However, the present research also indicates the highly complex nature of the experience of their bodies for these men.

The results from the current study indicated ways in which the participants engage in distorted thinking and point toward possible areas that current treatment models may usefully incorporate. Presently very little research has been conducted into treatment for muscle dysmorphia; however, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is the most widely used approach with people with experiencing muscle dysmorphia (Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000; Olivardia, 2002), although it is
recognised that much needs to be learned about the utility of CBT in treating people with body image difficulties (Cash & Strachan, 2002).

A rising trend in men presenting with eating disorders has been noted (e.g. Grogan, 1999; Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000), although recognised male eating disorder prevalence is still far lower than female prevalence (Garner & Garfinkle, 1997). The current study adds credence to the previous research discussed in this paper that males may attempt to control personal body-image distress in very different ways to women. Clinicians should be aware that men may present to psychological services with highly muscular bodies, yet experience personal distress characterised by eating problems and body image concerns. Corson & Anderson (2002) pointed out that complications in males with disordered eating are no less serious than in females. They cite compulsive exercising as particularly dangerous.

Prevalence rates for the difficulties described are variable. However, it is not unreasonable to expect problems associated with body image and diet to exist in an activity that, at competition level, encourages participants to strip body-fat down dangerously low levels (Mangweth et al, 2001; see interview 5 this paper).

5.3 Future research

It is apparent that much work is required in the area of male body image. Of particular clinical interest is the proposed diagnostic category of muscle dysmorphia (Chung, 2001; Olivardia, 2001; Choi et al, 2002). Current diagnostic criteria and research focuses upon the internal attributions of the individual (Olivardia, 2001). Important as this is, more work is required to understand the socio-cultural context within which male body image problems occur. This would
be particularly significant when considering preventative work as research has suggested that body image problems may start in childhood (e.g. Grogan & Richards, 2002).

A key finding in the current paper was the difficult relationship each participant had with diet and health. Further research is required to investigate whether this is a general feature for men who body-build or specific to the group studied. If the current findings are confirmed, research looking at cognitive factors would be useful, particularly as presently cognitive-behavioural therapy is indicated as the best treatment for men experiencing these kinds of problems (Olivardia, 2002; Pope, Phillips & Olivardia, 2000).

Further research should also look to discover whether age is a factor in the experience of male body image distress, as tentatively suggested within the current research paper. It may be useful to investigate whether maturational or cohort effects account for this, or if the findings are an artefact of this particular group of participants'.

5.4 Limitations of research

One of the main criticisms of the study could be the participant population. They were a self-selecting sample and are not necessarily representative of males who body-build. However, the aim of the research was to investigate body-image distress in males who body-build. Within a constructionist epistemology findings will always be conditional and not claim to represent all men who body-build. However, the researcher took a contextual-constructionist position, therefore some degree of generalisability is proposed. To this extent, it may be argued that
repetition of the research with other groups of men who body-build may be required to further validate the findings.

A sample size of five participants may appear quite small. However, within a grounded theory model of enquiry, one samples the data until saturation occurs and this determines the sample size. Saturation was indicated within the current study as themes reoccurred whilst, by interview 4, nothing new was emerging. Elliot (1989) analysed sample sizes in qualitative research and suggested that five participants can be adequate.

Another potential limitation of the study may have been the choice of single interviews. Wilkinson (1998) found that focus groups are more likely to produce naturalistic conversations. Grogan & Richards (2002) suggested that participants were more likely to self-disclose in a group setting and talk more freely. Furthermore they proposed that men would feel more comfortable disclosing issues relating to body image to women rather than another man. Therefore it may be suggested that information was withheld by participants in the current study due to the gender of the researcher. The researcher’s impression during interviewing was that all participants were comfortable and keen to talk. It may be that the researcher was not viewed as a threat because he was clearly not highly muscular.

In the current study the participants described body-building in terms of physique and bodily change. This may be a feature within the body-building culture, or it may be a function of the one-to-one interview. Grogan & Richards (2002) reported resistance to this within their sample, the males more likely to talk about function and less about the aesthetic quality of the male body. The men in the current study may have felt more able to talk openly about the aesthetic nature of their endeavours without fear of transgressing social rules within a group of peers.
6.0 Conclusion

Through their narrative the participants' have provided evidence of a multifactorial model of how men who body-build experience themselves as embodied beings. The men described both internal and external forces mediating their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. They described how these pressures exist over a range of environments and how they attempt to cope with this. The most significant areas were found to be; self-image; gym culture; health beliefs and behaviours; and social pressures.

Issues of control were found to be the common factor uniting these areas. The participants described attempting to exert control over the key areas. At times this was a negative experience and led to feelings of greater control loss, thereby reinforcing negative beliefs about the external world as a safe environment and increasing the confusion around the sense of self. This negative feedback mechanism appeared to drive the men further into the body-building culture and further away from general society. All of the participants' described being unsure of how they are viewed outside the body-building world, and all described anxiety about this.

The findings suggest that body-building at the level described by the participants' could be pathological. The discourse around diet and nutrition indicates that even at a non-competitive level, men who body-build may be experiencing distress around food and are willing to experiment with food supplements. Closely linked to this was the discourse around body-fat as highly undesirable. All participants' reflected that they were apprehensive about gaining body-fat. They attempted to control this through eating less and exercising more.
The current study indicates high levels of distress in certain areas for these participants. This may reflect the current shift in societal attitudes to masculinity and the subsequent dilemma experienced by many men as they attempt to redefine themselves as men. As such, the study indicates areas that clinician’s may need to consider when working with males experiencing psychological distress.
8.0 Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of approval of research from NHS Trust research committee

Appendix B: Participant consent form

Appendix C: Participant information sheet
20 November 2002
Andrew Mac Dougall
Clinical Psychology Dept
Lea Hurst Day Unit
Walton Hospital
Whitecotes Lane
Chesterfield
S40 3HW

Dear Andrew

Thank you for submitting your research project to the Clinical Research Committee. Your research proposal was discussed on 15 November 2002 and the Committee have given their approval to support the project.

If you require any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Legg
Research Co-ordinator
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

"Male body image: A qualitative Investigation"

Principle Investigator "Andy MacDougall"

This form should be read in conjunction with the Participant Information Leaflet

I agree to take part in the above study as described in the Participant Information Sheet.

I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time without justifying my decision.

I understand medical research is covered for mishaps in the same way as for patients undergoing treatment in the NHS i.e. compensation is only available if negligence occurs.

I have read the participant information leaflet on the above study and have had the opportunity to discuss the details with Andy MacDougall and ask any questions. The nature and the purpose of the research to be undertaken has been explained to me and I understand what will be required if I take part in the study.

Signature of participant ............................................................................................................

Date........................................................................................................................................

(Name in BLOCK LETTERS) ..................................................................................................

I confirm I have explained the nature of the trial, as detailed in the Participant Information Sheet, in terms which in my judgement are suited to the understanding of the participant.

Signature of Investigator .............................................................Date....................................

(Name in BLOCK LETTERS) ..................................................................................................
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET

Title of the study: Male body image: A qualitative investigation

Principle Investigator: Andy MacDougall

You may contact: Andy MacDougall
Dept. of Psychological Medicine for Older Adults
Lea Hurst Day Unit – Walton Hospital
Chesterfield
Tel.: 01246 552903

1 Purpose of the study

The aim is to interview six to nine male body builders and ask about their experience of bodybuilding and why they do it. There is very little research looking at how men think about themselves, particularly their bodies. It is hoped that by talking to men who body build, and are therefore concerned about how they look, we may begin to understand why some men in the general population get distressed about how they look.

2 What will be involved if I take part in the study?

You will be asked to talk about your experiences as a man and a body builder, your training, how you train and why. How other people react to you and what you think about that. You will have the opportunity to introduce things that you think are important to know.

3 Will information obtained by the study be confidential?

Yes, you will not be identifiable in any documents relating to this research. The conversations we have will be recorded onto audiotape. They will then be typed in full. The tapes will be kept in a locked cabinet, your name will not be written on the tape. When typed, details will be changed so that you cannot be identified.

4 What if I am harmed by the study?

Medical research is covered for mishaps in the same way as for patients undergoing treatment in the NHS i.e. compensation is only available if negligence occurs.

5 What happens if I do not wish to participate in this study or wish to withdraw from the study?

If you do not wish to participate in this study or if you wish to withdraw from the study you may do so without justifying your decision and your future treatment will not be affected. If you choose to withdraw, the tape of our meeting will be wiped clean and any paper copies will be destroyed.
8.0 References


Body Image in Male Body-builders:

A qualitative investigation

(Addendum)

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Addendum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example of open coding</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcript 1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcript 2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcript 3</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcript 4</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcript 5</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Open Coding: Interview 2

1-4  simplicity of message
4  evolving schedule of training
5-9  evolutionary theory to training & growth
10  accentuated importance of evolution message
14  many myths around muscle growth
15  hard work
18  simple units of development
19  achieve results
27  training a release/ energy/stress? Motivation?
30  motivation; keep self in shape
31  reason; vanity, looking good
32  reason; self-control
32-35  reactionary; setting event? I was fat
36-37  ideal shape- lean
38-9  aspirational; gymnasts or mid-weight boxer shape
40  translated lean shape=healthy
40  never wanted to be huge
41  negative ideation re-self-image & very muscular
44  ideal shape; muscular toned
45  dichotomy; fitness over muscularity (toned?)
46-47  sexually appealing; assumption that women prefer this shape in men
47  Link to virility
49  Initial motivation- looking good for women
49  Hooked- addiction?, reinforcement.
50  reinforcement schedule, physique improvement-enjoyment-more effort
52  Comparative benchmarking, always prospective, what can I be, rarely retrospective. Why? Self-esteem?
53  Distorted body perception? Never look at starting point but floating end-point
Self-critical, can’t notice positive change. **Negative feedback loop?**

Self recognition of negative-feedback loop

More content with shape as got older. Reconciled? Or wisdom?

Emotional upset. Bad work-out

Control, shape, fat

Poor knowledge base. Loss of control, extreme training, bulimic.

Distorted body image

Shock impact of realisation. All or nothing, stopped training.

All or nothing state, Obsessional?

Distorted body image, ignoring disconfirmatory evidence

Goal oriented – six pack

Fragility, balancing, teetering.

Emotional fragility

Fragility re-physique

Vanity, **What is their reference point for comparison**

Importance of perception of peers

Defensive external posture

social group critique, maintaining sense of coherence? Protective?

Degree of importance to individual mediates impact of comments

Reason for training, to induce a positive change

takes over, becomes primary goal

Initial motivation, weight gain, tight clothing.

Rapid reinforcement. Weight loss was easy

Motivator-felt more normal.

Social comparison, saw men in gym, aspired to bulk-up

Enjoyed, gave up job, worked on gym

Motivation- dramatic, quick gains in strength & shape. **Drive state**

Drive- positive about self.

External world less important (drop in wages)

social context as further reinforcer

External social impact, marriage, needed more money, new job, training dropped off
Social change, marriage breakdown. Began training again
reassertion of control, avoidance of external world
extreme position, reactionary? Weight loss...
Naivety? Nutritional knowledge poor
all or nothing, lost control. Stopped training again
Personality type, addictive?
Control. Learning about training & nutrition.
Weight gain? Bulk, so weight loss
Oscillation, bulimic behaviour, train – stop- slob-train- etc
Reinforcement mechanism, see improvement continue training
impact on external social world, reduced contact
Social aspect of weight training
positive affirmation
control; excessive training
illness, attributed to training
loss of control; binge, not train.
Reassert control;
Getting it right, ok for last 12 years
Way of life, continual process.
Nutrition, supplements etc
Multi billion dollar industry
Awareness of supplements- reading
Information source- muscle magazines
Further knowledge, working in supplement shop
Immersion in training culture, employment
immersed in biochemistry
Obsessive? Control features again
internal motivation; curiosity
Supplement use- convenience foods
Meticulous food calculations. Weighing etc. Ritualistic behaviour, part of training
Muscle growth & training, setting selves apart? From general public
Ease of measurement activity re-food
External confusion from lack of knowledge
biochemistry
Judgement of others, food weighing
Precision in body change
Perception of control. Weighing as a control mechanism.
Food diaries
Obsessional, can become obsessed with calorific intake
Takes over, not just about calories but metabolism.
Continual reassertion of importance of in-depth knowledge base.
Biochemical explanations of differing food controls
Dietary habits re-training become obsessional.
recognition of poor knowledge & impact when training
Training to simply burn fat
Obsessive, compulsive element to training at the time
Floating end point again. Muscle gain, bulk
Internal motivator-personal pride
sense of satisfaction, endorphins, addictive
sense of difference, superiority to general public
Greater control than general people
Motivation to continue, difference, enjoyment, shape, advert for shop
Self-esteem boost. Positive regard from others,
Control issues, important that if possible to control then do so.
Internal positive regard, self-esteem and worth
Out of the ordinary
Increased confidence, therefore, low self-esteem at one time?
Higher status, better than others, difference.
**Initial motivator, low in confidence when young**
Used body image change to boost self-esteem
Self-dislike when over-weight
Positive social reinforcement, people noticing muscularity in public
Social factors in desire for change. Conscious of shortness, trying to assert independence.
Tight clothing to accentuate muscles, **deflect from height**

Initial proposed reasons for others wanting to train-fitness

**Aesthetic.** Admitted reason **six-pack**

Cultural differences

Machismo motivator

hypothesis-Social display of masculinity (perception?)

Naivety of new-comers

hypothesis-Social aggression outlet in young males

Aesthetic, male concern over social judgement in terms of appearance

recognition of social change in last 10-15 years that has facilitated this

androgyny

Change in traditional male roles

Naivety/lack of knowledge due to? Intelligence or social situation as an inhibitor for understanding how to train properly

Giving something up to maintain physique **internal aesthetic**

Display, but, loss of other things (boxing)

Floating end-point, never satisfied.

Self-criticism, ?lack of insight?

Machismo? Not done to receive compliment?

Defensive to not admit to looking good; may acknowledge aesthetic reasons for training

Vanity prime motivator

Public negation of aesthetic outcome of training. Leading to negative cognitions? Or also internal perception?

recognition that aesthetics is still a prime motivator.

Increases confidence, when can admit it?

satisfied with body shape.

More at ease with shape and training as aged

**Obsession, six pack**

Drive- won’t ever let six pack go

major element in control of behaviour
negative connotation toward excessive body builders, intr-cultural difference, carpet carrier

Social comparison, watches others in gym
Learning all the time, magazines and observation

**Steroids**, pervasive, seductive? most body builders want to know about steroids

Steroid users, 2 categories; immediate no-effort (doesn’t work) or fast results toward bigness

Peer pressure strong element. Social comparison again
Defence mechanism, he’s only big because of steroids

Neutral position on steroids

informed choice important

Financial motivator in professional competition to take steroids

Cost implication, supplements generally.

Need sponsor or high income

moral position; ambiguity about whether dishonest, still need to train hard

cosmetic implants cheating

If motivation for high muscle growth strong enough would use steroids

admiration of athletic muscular toned shape, not bulk

Motivation for training, enjoyment, addictive

Control aspect

Average person training for self-confidence

recognition of element of low self-esteem

Gym cultures

social environment of health club

Hard-core gym’s

Hard-core, steroids used more, competitive, aggressive, comparative, bigger and better

Machismo culture to hard-core

Protective aspect? element of latent homo-sexuality

Suggestion of avoidance by many men to address reasons for training
Transcript One
I: I guess what I will start with I'm interested in training schedules that people do. What is your training schedule, where do you train?

P: I always train at the gym. I have, erm, I run on a Monday and a Wednesday, I do circuit training and step class for CV on a Sunday. Running parallel to that is, erm, a weights programme which I do in four sections which is my back and triceps one day, my chest and arms another day, my delts and traps, another day and my legs and back, erm legs and lower back on a separate day, so on four days.

I: Is that, so you do them... weight training on a.....

P: Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and a Saturday, so that then it's circuit training, which is CV on a Monday, Sunday, Monday and a Wednesday.

I: CV, that is Cardio-vascular....?

P: Cardio-vascular yeah.

I: So you know when you do the weights are you also doing some of the other stuff? CV and stuff

P: No.

I: So you set times specifically aside for concentrating on the weights.

P: mmmm

I: How did you decide on that programme? Particularly the weights.

P: erm, That programme came up with sort of reading about how it is best to do, erm, sort of chest and arms together, it's best to do back and triceps together, because when you work your back it also works your biceps as well through the nature of doing some of the weights so if you then try and do your biceps with your back your biceps are already fatigued through using your back so you do them on a separate day, therefore so you can work them the hardest. Erm, so that's how the programme came. In terms of what days I do it, it sort of fits in with the CV in terms of running. Sundays I tend to do the classes, CV because often on a Sunday I don't really feel like doing much. I do my legs on a Thursday because that then gives my legs time to recover for when I generally do my CV, erm, I've always done my back on a Tuesday er, chest I do on Friday and then delts. and traps. on a, on a Saturday. And that routine means that...........
I: It's a very full schedule isn't it?
P: erm, I have to....because if I didn't I'd be a blimp....(laughs)
I: Right
P: ....and I also on a, I also do abs. on a Thursday, erm, try to fit in abs also at
some other point as well.
I: As well as that though, the set four?
P: Yeah, its just that the abs, it generally floats, it not something that I do
particularly well, apart from when I do them on a class on a Thursday.
I: You said that you kind of read about, it was quite interesting, about the kind
of the muscle groups and knowing that doing your back also...
P: does your biceps...
I: ....so you do that on separate days. How did you, where did you find out
things like that from?
P: Erm, kind of reading about it. Lots of template, err, approaches to doing
muscular exercise. And sort of Men's Health, Muscle and Fitness and then
also talking to people who are down the gym who do similar programmes. I
mean, the kind of gym I go to is not full of huge weight training guys but there
are people who are into in a sort of hobby way, you sort of talk about these
kind of things, you know you talk about particular exercises that focus on
particular muscles and you know, say, I could spend three hours doing my
back but I've got to pick... I do one, two, three, four, I do five exercises on my
back.
I: Are these with free weights or machines?
P: I do as many, erm, the only machine I use is a lat. pull-down
machine....and that's the only machine, all the rest are free weights. It's much
better.
I: Yeah
P: That's something else I don't use free weights, free weights are fixed, they
try not to but they are so what happens is you tend to work a particular muscle
group you tend to focus a particular muscle group but what happens is,
probably say for your chest press, if you're using a chest press is you can push
more weight on a fixed machine, but, if your using a chest press is what it does
is it works all the other muscles around it that then stabilise the bar, so you
get, it's a much more healthy work out, if you get what I mean, in a sense that
you’re working the chest but it’s also making sure that the muscles around the
chest are....
I: And that’s using the...
P: Bar,
I: The bar as opposed to the machine?
P: yeah, where you just go up and down on the bar. And again on that if you
use dumbbells for the chest-press which is free weights on each arm you see.
I: So it’s better to do that....
P: hmmmm
I: ...in terms of equalising muscle development?
P: yeah. ‘Cos the other thing is if the machine is fixed erm, you do have,
naturally you do have slight dominance on one side or the other in terms of, I
get, especially my arms if you’re using a fixed machine it tends to exaggerate
that dominance as well...
I: yeah..
I: So what, I mean, you’ve kind of said about your schedule and were talking
about the weights and you do other parts of your schedule, there’s more to
your schedule that just weights, but weights, it sounds like there is a hell of a
lot of thought goes into that, I suspect there is of the whole programme but the
way you think about the weights and different muscle groups and the impact
they have on each other, I mean... why do you train, what is it for you that is
important.
P: I think it’s kind of, something that’s evolved. I dunno, do you want me to
go back into how I see the history of it?
I: For you?
P: yeah
I: yeah
P: Erm, at university I did, you know, I played water-polo and sort of football
and everything and that was all I can and enjoyed about and I got shoulder
injuries through water-polo. And then when I left university and moved to my
first job I didn’t know the area, I didn’t know anyone, polo places, I had more
money and I just stopped doing sport and got very unfit and put on a lot of
weight. So then joined a gym to change that, slowly got into, I couldn’t really
swim anymore because of my shoulders and slowly got into losing weight,
which I did, erm, and really got into the running which I still enjoy, but, sort of
lost too much weight and became very skinny erm, so therefore started doing
weights, erm...... And really enjoy it because I go, I enjoy being in the gym,
it's kind of hobby, it's where I go and escape, I know a lot of people there and
also sort of when you are doing the weights, you, I tend to train with people,
I've got, sort of my mate Cam or Andy or mate Rich, turns out you can do it
together, sets and you're spotting for each other and er..... it's really quite
enjoyable. Was that the quest, was that, what did you ask me?
I: It was just kind of why do you train and I guess it sounds like there's lots of
reasons behind that, you know you went into the historical, what led you to
that....
P: So now I enjoy it, it's........about me getting bigger....... to an extent to see
if I can, erm, I guess it's about being different as well.
I: I: Being different from.............?
P: Errr, I never really thought about it, but there is something about being
bigger than other people. Lifting more weight than other people. It's not a
particularly aesthetic thing, I think, it is something about being different.
I: When you say other people do you mean other men or just general.....
P: Other people I think. I was out at the weekend, I was out drinking and
some people I haven't seen in a few months sort of noticed that how,...I was
wearing a sort of long sleeved black top that I thought made me look quite
small, but they were surprised how big I was, some other people were saying
they noticed the size of my back that I don't consider particularly big, even
though I know my back is probably the strongest part of my body. It's just, I
don't know
I: What was that like, people actually commenting
P: 'cos other people noticed I looked different?
I: but different, you can look different in a lot of ways; being noticed
particularly for your shape,
P: You're different in a way that other people often aspire to, not that I, don't,
but that's different to. I don't think that other people necessary; you want to
be
big or muscular..... but I guess they do.... I don't know.
I: It sounded like when you're talking about historically that wasn't initially
why you do it....

P: why I do it...no, but now while I’m doing it that has become part of it, the whole aspect of being in a gym sort of friends in the gym, working with them and that runs parallel with then the fact that, that maintains itself while you are going, and then what runs parallel to that is sometimes people do notice outside, you know, sort of,....sort of, how big you are....

I: What was your response to that when more than one person commented.....

P: ......................what was my response..............

I: how did you feel....

P:...I was slightly pissed....oh well, it’s really nice if people do that,

I: and I just wonder, you said that although yeah they saying that you had a big back, noticed you were more muscular...

P: ...quite muscular...

I: ...you said that you don’t really perceive personally you don’t see yourself as your back as being particularly big although you know it is your strongest feature in terms of the training you don’t see that

P: No,

I: So was there a kind of a dichotomy there of what they were saying and what you think? Or....

P: Errr, yeah, don’t think that my muscular, the muscles that I have are particularly noticeable.

I: Noticeable.....ok...

P: I don’t think they would....

I: ...generally...

P: ...generally, I don’t think that people would identify me as being, “oh look at him, he’s a big guy”, or he’s got, well not big guy because I know I’ve not got a big frame but erm, “he’s got a lot of muscles”. I don’t think people would identify me as that.

I: But when somebody does, as they did...

P: hmmm... then it’s surprising and it’s kind of nice ‘cos you put a lot of time and effort in.

I: So how do you compare yourself to others then. How would you compare yourself to run of the mill guys of your age, in terms of again, well we’re
talking about how you think about yourself.

P: In terms of people of my, I would, as........somebody who has to work very

hard................to be...where I am, which is probably slightly above what the

average person in the street doesn’t do anything, but if they worked out the

same as what I do they would be much bigger and have a much better

physique than I would.

I: What do you think, how do you, how do you arrive at that, what makes you

think....that, that would happen. That somebody would train the same as you

and...

P: ... well I put in a lot of effort and I still carry a mid-riff and I don’t consider

myself to have a good physique at all.

I: So personally you don’t think you’ve got a good physique?

P: No, slightly bulbous in certain areas, certainly don’t have a good physique.

I: And how does that make you feel about yourself?

P: Erm........ envious of other people, the fact that they have better genetics

than I necessarily do.

I: There’s something about how, what?, that you would never genetically be

able to aspire to...?

P: yeah, I’d never, yeah, there’s, you know.... There’s a lot, there’s people out

there who have a better base than what I have to go from. Which is what it is

all about, really. And,......

I: So do you compare yourself say in the gym, it sounds like maybe you do....

P: Errm....

I: Do you see someone that you think that’s an aspiration?

P: ..... pause.......... I don’t know; yes and no...... there’s a lot of guys I train

with who................there’s a couple of guys I train with who’ve got huge

shoulders and huge traps., erm but I don’t envy them as such, partly because I

think ‘cos they train chest, shoulders and traps. and that’s kind of all they do

and so for them it just seems to be about aesthetically having big shoulders

which isn’t for me. I guess I would be more envious comparing myself to

people who are, sort of, don’t work out a lot, you know maybe come down,

who I see down the gym, you know, once or twice a week who aren’t toned or

anything but if they did they would look fantastic. People who are good

looking or have good genetics or have a good base to work from that I don’t
have, I would probably compare myself to them and feel slightly envious, but other people who are just bigger than me then no, I don’t think I do.

I: I guess, I mean it’s quite interesting what you’ve said about there are guys that train just specific areas and are looking for that particularly bulky and it sounds like upper body bulky image........

P: yeah, it’s here, that’s it...

I: and there’s something about how there’s an aesthetic, a strong aesthetic element to that, they are concerned with how they look and it sounds like you are saying they are interested how other people perceive them.

P: Probably yeah,

I: But that’s not something that you, you’re not after that aesthetic quality?

P: Well, no, I don’t know whether, not in the same way, they sort of like, you know, going out just for them to sort of, oh they’ve got big shoulders. While for me that is, I don’t know, slightly boring for you know, there’s the fact that if you just do work out your chest and you,; it’s the whole thing, you’ve gotta work, you’ve gotta do everything it’s the whole, you can’t; with big shoulders it just looks like big shoulders, it looks a bit odd I think, it looks a bit daft.

I: So just concentrating on say upper-body, a specific part doesn’t look right?

P: Not to me, no. There’s one particular guy I know who goes down there and er, we call him pointy man because his er, ha, ha, I don’t know, he’s actually a really nice guy but he never works his…. He’s got a huge chest, huge shoulders and arms, but he’s got a waist of about, a narrow waist and narrow legs erm, so he’s just got like this inverted triangle on top of his little waist and the reason why he is ‘cos he’s also got trendy Mohican pointy hair, so he’s sort of like triangle on top of triangle and it just doesn’t look right, you know. The guy is a big guy,

I: What’s his motivation do you think; how is his motivation different from your motivation? Why do you think he.....

P: People probably perceive him as the same but I don’t know it’s.............

he’s very good at what he does actually and he trains really well, he’s got, in terms of, you know he really seems to go to muscle fatigue and he goes to muscle failure and you know in terms of you take it to the point where you can’t lift it anymore and so you are breaking the fibres, and so he actually......

I never see him do any CV or anything or erm, I think it is about the way that
he looks.

I: I want to come back to that in a second, but I’m kind of getting a sense that there is an aesthetic for you as well. You’re comparing yourself, and to a degree, err, whilst recognising that you are more muscular than the average guy, you talked about having to train really hard for that having to put so much effort into it for, it sounds like almost, not a massive amount of reward, whereas somebody else could train the same amount of time, put the same effort in and see far greater results?

P: I guess there’s often a sense that I train to stave off what would be the case if I didn’t.

I: So if you didn’t train what would happen to you?

P: I would weigh 15 some odd stone and be a white, fat blimp.

I: How much do you weigh at the moment?


I: Do you know what your percent body fat is?

P: errr

I: Is that something that you have any interest in?

P: yes, it’s about 16%, or it was. It’s difficult because, as I say about 18 months ago I was a stone and a half lighter. It’s something I’m not quite sure what I am going to do about that I am a stone and a half heavier, I have got a lot more fat around my mid-riff but I am aware that I look better for it, in terms of just healthier; when I was doing a lot of running and I was light and that helped my running but I was really gaunt. And that is a complete tension for me.

I: Tension between knowing that there is extra weight which, some of which isn’t being translated into muscle,

P: hmmm

I: But also that the extra weight, you both know and people are saying? Are people saying that you look better as well?

P: hmmm, yeah

I: and that’s the tension?

P: Yeah, between looking better and carrying extra weight around.

I: The extra weight as fat?
P: Yes,
I: If you could carry that as muscle...
P: .... Oh it’s not, yeah, extra fat rather than extra weight as muscle, erm,
I: So how do you reconcile yourself to that, how do you think about that?
P: My reaction to do that is to make myself bigger,
I: Muscular?
P: hmmmm, I guess to almost hide it.
I: Okay, and in terms of changing your body frame?
P: By, in terms of putting more muscle on, yeah. So sort of hide it within, if
you talk about percentage body fat you put on more muscle the body fat that
you carry is going to be less, which is why the CV that I do at the minute is
miniscule in comparison to what I normally do and what I do CV is just in
terms of, just to stave off, I have a really slow metabolism. So, its.....my diet
is the biggest thing I struggle with all of the time.
I: In terms of?
P: Not eating loads of fatty foods (laughs).
I: Right.....so you are quite liberal with foods that you enjoy? Would that be...
P: My diet is something that I watch all of the time, I don’t get it right and
what have you but I will think a lot about what I eat and try and erm, but it’s
er, I don’t enjoy cooking and I don’t enjoy preparing food and so it’s very
difficult to eat properly unless you are prepared to put the time in preparing
food.
I: I suspect though that you are very aware of the close link between
nutritional balance and muscle growth and particularly with the high training
schedule that you have, so how do you account for that? Do you account for
that, do you build that into, for instance, diet at all?
P: I try and get as much protein as I can, erm, ....... I try to watch the fat and
make sure that, at one time I would pretty much cut fat out of my diet, but...
it’s not some.....and I can do it, and become very good at it, erm, but again
then you don’t build muscle by going on a low fat low carb. diet, or it’s very
difficult to grow muscle and....... Yeah I’m aware and in terms of cardio-
vascular weight control and muscle building are all kind of quite conflicting
dietary habits. And I have this tendency for foods that I like, you know, pasta
complex carbohydrates which you want to be avoiding if you are weight
training erm, but you know…
I: Why would you avoid those of you were weight training, I mean I’m not sure why that is.
P: Because they will just get, if you’re weight training that’s the kind of thing you want simple carbohydrates to give you the energy then the protein to build the muscle, you want to keep down on your complex carbohydrates, difficult to break down ‘cos they just get converted into fat.
I: OK
P: It’s a whole science in itself, in terms of, you know, I’ve got friends who do it, who eat every two hours. You know and they control their carb. intake and their protein intake and they make sure they get the right mix of protein and carbs. per meal, ‘cos unless you eat a certain amount of carbs. then it retracts from the protein that you eat. You’re body will obviously take its energy source first before it start building muscle or storing fat.
I: How do they do that, do they work it out?
P: They work it out, body weight, carbohydrate intake and make sure the carbs. are simple carbs. combined with certain meals with complex carbs. and protein and then you eat small amounts every two hours.
I: It sounds like to do that you’d have to evaluate for each food that you are eating what the nutritional………..
P: You have to plan your meals out,
I: And also weigh things?
P: Weigh it, make sure you know what you are eating, yeah.
I: That sounds like a massively complex and time consuming process to go through, if you are going to do it regularly.
P: Yes, it is yeah, it takes hours. Most people tend to prepare two meals, two days of meals a night and that can take two and a half hours. Such as doing your rice and your chicken and your tuna and, then making it palatable.
I: But as you said you don’t like preparing food, you don’t like cooking.
P: No…
I: So, it’s not something that you’d do?
P: No, it’s something that is always on my mind and I would like to and I always think about doing it but never quite get around to it, being arsed…but I do, do you know, in terms of, I do, I kind of do it in another way, you know, if
I have scrambled eggs I’ll have four eggs but only two yolks because the protein is in the white or the majority of the protein is in the white without fat. Erm and I try and eat chicken and I eat lots of tuna, erm.

I: So the people that have, that you know that have the specific diet put that time and energy into that as well as obviously training and working out training schedules and all this sort of thing, how do you think they would react if they couldn’t do that, or they stopped doing it. How do you think they could stop doing that? If they wanted, are they able to enjoy food, or is it just serving a mechanistic purpose?

P: I think a lot of them don’t really, aren’t really into food actually, it’s sort of, the guy that I am particularly thinking of he says that he’d quite happily eat the same thing day in day out, it’s not something that particularly interests him. He quite often comes and says, he’ll come when he’s training and say he’s sick to the back teeth of eating ‘cos he has to eat every two hours and he’s bored with eating. But could they give it up? Erm,

I: In a sense maybe not could they give it up although that would be an interesting question but what I mean, how do you think, what would happen if they didn’t do that? How would they feel about that? What would there perception of what would happen be? Maybe you don’t know.

P: No, no, it’s something that, it isn’t, I’m not sure it’s something they consider, ‘cos that is what they do.

I: That’s a life long commitment otherwise at some stage they will have to stop putting that investment into the preparation of basically fuel.

P: Yeah, in terms of food or the whole weight training stopping?

I: In terms of food,

P: In terms of food I think that if they stop they’d be worried they couldn’t get as big as they could get.

I: I guess within that.

P: ‘cos that goes with protein shakes, the amino acids, creatine all the dietary supplements that goes with it, green tea.

I: Green tea?

P: Green tea...
I: yeah, I haven’t heard of it.

P: It supposedly raises your metabolic rate do that you burn fat more easily, kind of like caffeine.

I: Oh right, okay..

P: So people are taking protein to put on the muscle, amino acids to facilitate that, creatine to aid muscle recovery and green tea to increase the metabolism.

I: And are these things that you considered using as well?

P: I’ve used creatine when I was running, a lot.

I: You say used, in the past tense,

P: yeah, I haven’t for a long time. It doesn’t do you kidneys a lot of good.

I: Is that why you stopped?

P: Errr, yeah, I think it was because I was getting pains in my kidneys, so it er, but it’s good stuff. A lot of people do use it long-term. It er, but whenever I do anything like that I want to know what it is that it is doing and how it’s working so I know that it sort of increases the mitochondria within the muscles to convert ATP to ADP,

I: So that’s quite an in-depth understanding of the bio-chemistry,

P: yeah, adenine-triphosphate and all that kind of stuff.

I: You talked about how you, kind of concerned about how erm, you feel as though you’ve got fat around your stomach, is there any temptation to use supplements say to aid….

P: Yes, but I don’t believe they would work.

I: So there’s a belief that they wouldn’t help you in that endeavour?

P: No, I don’t, its.

I: What is that belief about, is it about you or is it about the supplement?

P: I’m a great believer that everywhere you look there are the miracle diets, the miracle ways of shifting it erm, and if there was everyone would be using it, if it worked, and as far as I am concerned it is nothing more simple than, you know, calories out more than calories in you lose weight, if calories in are more than calories out then you put weight on and I don’t believe it gets beyond that simple equation.

I: How do you think that works for you then?

P: How do you mean?

I: Well you’re worried that you’ve got, been unable to shift the fat around your
middle, and your kind of philosophy on how fat is deposited or lost is that
simple relationship between calories in calories out. How does that work for
you? Given your calorie expenditure, I suspect, is very high.
P: I er, as far as I am concerned I have a slow metabolism. I have a slow
metabolism and a fat tooth.....
I: A fat tooth?
P: Well people have a sweet tooth, but if I went in I wouldn't head for the
chocolate I would head for the crisps or the cheese savouries or the, I guess a
savoury tooth would be a better way of putting it. Sausage rolls or the bread
or the whatever, anything that’s, I shouldn’t be having...
I: Why do you think that is? Have you always been like that?
P: Hmmm
I: Before you were training..
P: Yeah, absolutely, I've always, it wasn't a chocolate bar it was those little
triangle cheese savouries that I liked.
I: Yeah,....I'm starting to feel hungry....
P: Yeah...
I: So I guess...... yeah, so I guess we're talking about your concept of you but
also about other people that you know how they think about that, why they do
what they do. Are you aware of people that would take a supplement further
still, and use say, steroids.
P: No, not as far as I'm aware come across anyone who has used steroids. I've
heard of people talking about people using steroids but I've never been aware
of anyone taking or using steroids.
I: In the gym and within the circle of people you know what is the opinion of
steroids and people that use them.?
P: A bit sad really.
I: What's sad about it?
P: You are prepared to damage your body for this, you know you're, it's, I
think that there's a line between sort of, if you've got a serious training
programme that you are doing that, you know, that you are doing five times a
week, six times a week and following a dietary, that's a hobby, that's
something that you do; but when you do steroids that sort of steps over that
edge into some sort of obsession. Well that's the way that I see it anyway. I
think that’s the way a lot of people would still. You’re going to bugger things up if you are going to do that.

I: So to take that next step sounds like, it sounds like it needs, er, er, a change from simply wanting to be fairly comfortable with how you look and how you feel to actually what…. how would you think people that take that step…

P: Steroids….

I: Yeah, why do you think that might be?

P: They want it now.

I: okay,

P: For me and a lot of people there is a lot about just the process of doing it, of going down the gym with people, you know, for me, just doing the whole thing, it’s sort of self-perpetuating activity in itself. Whilst if you are doing the steroids it’s just about I wanna’ get big, as quickly as I can. I see it in the same way as people who are training just one part of their body. It’s not …

I: Right, yeah. I guess I kind of want to bring that around a bit because I was interested what you said about, you know we were talking about people who, like the guy that you know who eats every two hours, weighs everything out, we said what would be the concern if he didn’t do that, and you said the concern would be that he wouldn’t get as big as he could do, and I guess I’m thinking about him and also thinking about how you think about this. What is big enough? Is there a big enough? And if so, what is it, how do you know when you are there?

P: pause….. I worry about getting too big.

I: Right.......... 

P: Errrr, pause…… and sometimes when I think about it I just think the whole process of doing this is all about conflicts, that you walk this fine line of never being happy one way or the other, erm, but what is too big is I guess is when, if people started to perceive me as gross, I guess, that would be too big.

I: So it, one definition for you of too big is the perception of others, who might the others be?

P: Erm, somebody who I didn’t know would be the worst one. If somebody who I didn’t know just saw me and went, “oh god he’s stupid and ridiculous”, then that would be too big I guess.

I: What about your training partners, because you’ve already commented that
somebody looks ridiculous in the gym, so how do you think their idea might be similar or……

P: he looks ridiculous because he doesn’t train his lower body…

I: Okay, so it’s to do with symmetry…

P: proportion, yeah symmetry

I: Do you think that your training partners would have, or the people that you know and are friendly with would have a different concept of bigness and a different concept of maybe where concept…..

P: because it’s not aesthetic, it’s not about aesthetics, it’s kind of just about, again the process of eating and lifting and………

I: right, okay, that’s interesting, so it’s not just about the end result but,  everything that goes…..

P: …the process…

I: …into that.

P: Hmmm

I: It’s kind of almost sounds like it about the discipline of, so what is it about that regime if you like, what is it for you, because clearly there is whilst you may not go into the full nutritional side of it you certainly are interested in that and the schedule that you set yourself sounds incredibly disciplined to stick to it.

P: Erm, but what’s the discipline about actually doing the weights?

I: Why is that, the process in a sense, it sounds as if the process is as important as the end result itself.

P: Yeah, it is. Erm, pause,

I: What’s important about the process, can you tell me?……

P: I think it is something about the process being quite……………..it’s quite affirming in itself in terms of, I’m sure, endorphins, I’m sure there is a release of something erm. You are working with someone which is quite, there is an element of team-working there in terms of spotting for other people and sort of helping them, you know, err, do something that they couldn’t do and then there is that sense of you lifting weight that you never thought you could. The other week I was doing incline bench-press with dumbbells and I was using 70lb dumbbells in each hand which is what, 70 lbs, that’s getting on for, sort of, 30kg’s, isn’t there 2.5……
I: 2.2 lbs. In a kilo,
P: Yeah, so you are probably saying about 30kg weights so, which for me for each arm, they are quite big. They are pretty big especially as I was doing it at an incline which is for you pectoral minor so you are doing it for the smaller muscle group as well.
I: So there is something about that process, I mean it sounds like the process also is about a process of continual development?
P: Yeah, I was on there lifting dumbbells that were like that and I didn’t think that I would be able to do that.
I: Is there an element of that you can perceive that it looks impressive as well?
P: I guess that I’d be trying to act all modest to say no, I think there is an element of that, though ................ I wouldn’t say that you would lift the weights and get up look around to see who was watching. But there is, kind of, as long as you know.
I: It kind of seems to tie-in with what we were saying earlier about a goal almost, we talked about bigness and big-enough, if that’s a goal in itself then it’s, I don’t know..............
P: ................I think there is a goal of bigness but I don’t think there is this idea of an end point or goal, it is just, to be bigger. So its sort of, as you do, it kind of shifts. The gap may decrease slightly but I don’t think that you would ever get there, because there is too much other stuff about the process that is going on.
I: yeah, sure; is that how it seems for you, that there is an intangible, there is a goal but in a sense it’s not a finite goal but one of bigness.....
P: Yeah, and if I was fair my goal would be to look like someone on the front of Men’s Health magazine, even though I am aware that is never going to happen.
I: Is that because, like you said, genetic make-up?
P: Yeah, I carry far too much fat, erm, you know I don’t have that particular muscle shape, erm, I don’t have, no it’s not, you know. I would get a lot bigger than I would toward ripped and defined as they are.....
I: So do you think that’s not something that you could achieve, that kind of ripped look,
P: No I couldn’t.................. not without looking really gaunt in the face
and putting myself through it and just..... it would just, I'd have to.....I don't
know,.... pause ...., no I don't think I possibly could really. I’d have to work
and I’d have to stop doing my CV which would make me unfit which seems
slightly odd really. I don’t like the idea of being unfit.

I: So for you that important element of, also cardio-vascular work, which I
suspect isn’t there for lots of people weight training, maybe I’m being unfair?
P: No, no it’s not..... you don’t see, I think maybe ten minutes quarter of an
hour on the bike before they do stuff, but that’s about it.

I: I am quite intrigued by this end, this floating end point in a way, because I
do get the impression...........
P: nothing exists, don’t get the impression?

I: I get the impression whatever goal there is, you know so, the reason I was
interested you said about this guy you know who perhaps is worried he
couldn’t achieve the muscle if he stopped his diet, but maybe five years down
the line that would still be a worry for him, do you think? Or even two years
down the line. Training and having this diet.

P: Well he’s kind of on a, for him he has got a fixed goal, he has set himself to
get to 85kg in weight. Erm, so he is working towards that but he doesn’t want
to put on any fat, so that is why he is controlling his diet. But he’s not really
getting, well, he is getting there and I’m sure he will but I don’t think that will
be the end of it when he does get there. So there is a goal I guess for him, but
for me maybe it floats........

I: And do you get a sense where there may be a goal for people who are
particularly serious about say weight training that as you said for you it feels
like a floating point that if that goal is achieved then it simply gets moved....
P: Yeah......

I: ..further on, what’s that about? Why does it move on?
P: ........pause...........

I: If you had a goal, and lets say you could achieve the ripped look and
everything, do you think that would be enough? And it maybe for you, to say
that’s great, I’m going to maintain that. Or do you think that...
P: .No, ‘cos you’d want to improve it wouldn’t you? If you were dedicated
enough to put in the amount of effort it takes to get to that kind of look and
that kind of physique then I suspect no-one is going to be happy with
something, they'll always be working on something and training something
and in the same way that often if you have a big meal you suddenly feel fatter,
you look in the mirror and feel that you have put a lot of weight on when
objectively you know that you haven't erm, so even if you were like that there
are gonna' be days when you feel like you're losing it and stuff so I think you
would continue to work.

I: the guys that you know in the gym, have clearly, the amount of effort that
goes into what you do, they do sculpting your body, looking good, I guess I'm
interested, and again it might not be the case; do they recognise that they look
good compared to others?
P: No, because you're in an environment where, you're in an environment
where everyone else is, you're in the gym.

I: Well I guess maybe lets say on a Friday night, talked about people coming
up to you and saying, and that felt quite nice.
P: I wouldn't wear clothes that revealed...pause......well people say that I do
wear tight clothes, ha, ha. But I would say that I wore clothes that, you know,
I'd wear black long-sleeved tops. I would never wear a short-sleeved shirt or
anything like that.

I: Why?
P: Erm, because in my head if you do that then you're showing, trying to
show-off what you think you've got, and other people might be just saying
"what is he doing that for, he's not muscular or anything",

I: So other people might almost be taking the piss saying.........
P: ...yeah...

I: “look at him he thinks he's thinks he's really...”
P: yeah, yeah. And I suspect that might be more to do with me rather than
what necessarily other people think.

I: When you say other people do you mean other people that train?
P: Yeah, but having said that I don’t see, I don’t think I, I don’t, I don’t think
you see other people from the gym when they go out they don’t wear, you do
see the big guys out who are absolutely enormous and they wear the little
white T-shirts, you know, and if they’re not stood at the door of a bar they are
inside with their little white T-shirts and I do think they look a bit sad.

I: yeah, I mean, you know, I guess, it's interesting because we've moved on to
what other peoples perception might be and what your perception of what
other peoples perception is
P: yeah (laughs)
I: erm, generally, what do you think that people generally, the slob, or you
know, not the slob but people who, I don’t do that much exercise, general
public....
P: What do they think of me?
I: ..of people who train as much as you do, what’s your perception of that?
How do you think....
P: How I’m perceived by people in the gym or how I’m perceived by the
general public?
I: Just general public,
P: Public, skinny.
I: I mean in terms of what you do. So you think people see you as skinny?
P: Yes.
I: How do you think they would react if they knew your training schedule?
P: ha, ha, ha, well, he puts in a hell of a lot of effort for not a lot of gain.
I: And do you perceive yourself as skinny?
P: No, I perceive myself as chubby.....
I: ?right?
P: laughs
I: There’s a dichotomy there,
P: there’s a lot of dichotomies isn’t there?
I: I guess that’s quite interesting, pause, do that think that sort of, not
confusion erm, that dichotomy of thought exists for a lot of people? First of
all within the gym maybe, is that something you are aware of?
P: erm, yeah, and I think that because it’s a, the gym that I go I’d say it’s a
predominantly sort of weight loss place where you know, so, yes. I think it is.
There are a lot of people trying to lose weight, not doing a very good job at it,
I think because it is something that I am quite into I can, erm, the naivety of
people when they go and work out and how they work out and the
ridiculousness of it, you know, you sort of, the chubby bloke who goes in
there on the treadmill wearing a running mac. to sweat more because he has
this naïve thought that it means he is going to lose weight. But then again
there is also the other people in there who seem to have a reverse who seem to
wear incredibly tight gym clothes that are obviously far, far to small for them,
and oblivious to the rolls and bulges that protrude. They’re less so.
I: I kind of wonder if the dichotomy within people who train, serious trainers
like yourself and people you know may exist, generally.
P: You mean this idea that yeah….
I: …one’s perception of oneself differs from perhaps, you know you said you
may see yourself as chubby whereas others may see you as being skinny, erm
P: But that is quite a , I realise those two conflict exist quite far apart really.
I: But do you think, I just wonder how, whether those kind of dichotomies
exist within the general population.
P: I think those kind of dichotomies do exist, not exactly that way, not a
chubby-skinny but I certainly do yes.
I: How much of that is a motivator for you?
P: I think it is probably quite a lot, because you are always trying to put that
right. You’re trying to close that gap I guess. Or for me is go to a third place,
toned.
I: How will you know when you have got there, maybe you are already there.
P: No, I’m not. I don’t know. Pause
I: What else, do you think there is stuff that would be useful to know or add,
or think about.
P: What do you mean?
I: In terms of what I am doing, or indeed if there’s things that, yeah, are of
interest.
P: No, I just, the reasons why we do it and the perceptions of other people and
perceptions of people in the gym.
I: I mean I’m particularly interested in the guy who is weighing all of his food,
I have to say, that’s….
P: He’s not that big,
I: But that is going to have certainly social implications for all of that and……
P: Oh his wife has threatened to leave him on the basis of how much
Tupperware he has. If you do that sort of thing you’d be amazed how much
Tupperware you end up buying.
I: But it does, I suspect not only does it have a social impact but probably
quite a strong psychosocial impact, in terms of not, I don’t mean that in terms
of an abnormal necessarily or however you want to think of it, but just in
terms of how you perceive yourself and those around you and the situation
around you, the social impact that has.

P: He’s very touchy to any suggestions he’s small.

I: So if it were suggested to him that he was small he’d be, what? Annoyed,
upset.

P: I get on really well with him and a few weeks ago I was in the gym and he
came in and, I can’t remember how it came up, but basically I quipped, joked
sarcastically, whatever label you want to put on it, I think someone was asking
me about, particularly how to work that particular muscle group and Andy
walked in and I said “ask Andy, he knows all of them. It don’t, he does all
these weights, it doesn’t do him any good but he keeps trying”, and he
didn’t like it, he really didn’t like it. And I felt quite bad really, and I wouldn’t
have said it if the guy wasn’t getting bigger,

I: yeah

P: He’s very concerned. He weighs himself every Friday he’s going up to
85kg, and he’s very concerned that every-time he puts on weight he’s actually
putting it on as fat. He’s not as far as I can see. But to the point where as far
as I know on Saturday he went out and bought his own body-fat monitor.

I: Right.

P: Which I would buy, but I wouldn’t ….

I: but you already have an idea that last time you did some evaluation sit was
15%. Which is what, what do you make of that.

P: the low end of normal. Or the low end of what I would expect someone of
my height and weight to be, somewhere between 16 an early 20’s is fine.

I: And yet for you that is too much?

P: Yeah, professional footballers normally about 8%, professional body
builders when they go into competition are at 4%, which is getting to
dangerously low, so that means they basically have fat around their organs and
that is it.

I: what’s a goal do you think, what would you like? I mean, it sounds as
though it is important actually, body fat,

P: hmmmm
I: Is it as important as muscle bulk?

P: Yeah, err, pause.... It's not as important, it's significant because er, you know, to have low body fat without any muscle looks ridiculous. If someone suggested whether I could have muscle bulk, or early 20% muscle and fat or 9% fat percentage and no muscle I'd take the former rather than the latter. So, probably 65/35.

I: You talked about when you lost a lot of weight and you looked very gaunt you didn't like that

P: No, well I felt very thin, I can see in hindsight how maybe I did look just like a bag of bones

I: how tall are you?

P: 6ft 2, I'd like to be 9%

I: 9%

P: Yeah, just under the double figures

I: Is that, it sounds quite an aesthetic thing as well, choosing a number that is just under the double.

P: Yeah, 9%

I: Yeah, it's got a resonance about it

P: Yeah, I'd say 8, 8 or 9%. Be a bit of hard work really.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

P: I don't know

I: It's very interesting, okay.
Transcript Two
J: it's one of these things that some of the people tend to forget that we are trying, erm, we try and stress as much as possible that we work on the acronym KISS, Keep It Simple Stupid. Because that's basically how it works, it is very simple, it is very straightforward. How you actually change your body shape, but it is a product of evolution, so ermm, it's one of these things that you can't ignore and you get new products especially supplements, that come out on the market that claim to do this that and the other but aren't going to do it because, these er a feedback mechanism that we've evolved that will stop it from happening, it works in theory, it works in vitro, in a test-tube; it doesn't work in real life. But it is vital that you understand, there's a couple of things we try and explain to people, one is the first law of thermodynamics, energy cannot be created it can only be moved from one form into another. So you can't make a pound of body fat from a Mars bar, it's just physically impossible, so there's all this mythos around in the market that you can look at. That's just not going to happen, it's impossible, it can't do that, but there's other factors that people haven't taken into account, that causes weight gain or weight loss or whatever. So ermm, we try and keep everything KISS, Keep It simple Stupid, and take it back to its simplest point and then take it from that.

I: So, I mean that's really interesting, I'd like to talk to you a bit more about er, that, your ideas about that, because that's where thinking is moving, evolution. But I'd like to ask you a little bit first about you and about what kind of training do you now.

J: Mainly erm, I do, train with weights two or three times a week. I'll do fitness work, I like to box, I like, I used to do martial arts, I've always been involved, enjoyed, some kind of contact sport. I'm not particularly aggressive, but I find it is a release, I like doing bag work, punch bags and things like that, I mean I just, I'm fairly adept, I learn quite quickly and I've got fairly good footwork and hand-eye co-ordination so I find I can pick up a sport quite easily. But it's mainly I suppose, erm, fitness, keeping myself in shape. There is a certain amount of vanity involved in it, that's possibly due to some kind of, like, self-control. I used to be very fat, I used to be, I had a motorbike accident, I had a car accident when I was twelve, had a motorbike accident a
few years later and spent the best part of a year in hospital and erm, came out
and just sat around, didn’t go back to work and just went up to about 15st.
Currently, I’m normally about just over 11 stone, and I like to keep myself
quite lean. My idea of, I suppose, it’s respect that you see a reflection of
yourself and I look at gymnasts and middle-weight boxers with a good
physique and think, that’s a good healthy, it’s not too exaggerated and that’s
the kind that I like,. I’ve never had this wish to be massive muscled, I don’t
equate that with any kind of self-image. It’s not something that I particularly
like.
I: More muscular toned?
J: Muscular toned, yeah. I’ve always, I’d look at someone like that, like a
gymnast, you’ve got a balance between fitness and muscularity. Which I
assume, because I suppose, I wouldn’t say I find it attractive but I assume that
women will find it attractive. Virility and things like that. And I think that
probably, as much as I didn’t admit it to myself until about ten years ago, that
probably was a foundation for why I was training. But then you get hooked
into the training, actually enjoy it, you see progress and I think that is probably
relevant to what you are talking about is that people, when they get into this
industry or this kind of training don’t ever look back, and never have a starting
point, they only look forward and this is where body dysmorphia comes in,
they never see themselves as they are or from what they were, they only see
themselves as what they are not. If you look at a body builder, and you can
ask my partner Jill about this, we know lots of professional body builders and,
one in particular called Ian, he’s fantastic, Mr (removed- top national
competitor) he’s just an awesome body-builder, you’d say, “Ian you’re
looking great today”; “yeah well me arms just aren’t…. I need to work a bit
more on this I need to work on my obliques down here”, and it’s like, Christ,
you know it’s still, he looks in the mirror and, I must say I don’t look in the
mirror and think oh yeah chest is looking good, arms are looking good, I think
no, that needs more work. It’s quite like a negative feedback, you give to
yourself. The last couple of years I had, probably the last three or four years,
I’ve actually become, well I’m 42 in March so, its, I’ve kind of become
happier. Years ago I’d have been really upset if I’d had a bad work-out, or if I
thought I’m getting fat, or very controlled and very, erm, very much trying to
control my shape and things like that. Interesting enough about, about fifteen
years ago I went through quite a severe training period, I knew nothing about
nutrition, total beginner, and I was almost bulimic. Really, really...I can see
how it works because I trained that hard and I nearly made myself sick one
day after I had something to eat, ‘cos I just didn’t want the calories, but I
realise what I was about to do, it kind of hit me quite hard and I didn’t train or
anything for about six months afterwards. I realise that if I had started erm, I
think I’m probably quite, when I get into something I focus on it and think, if I
started on something like that I don’t think I’d ever, you know. So you see
how easy, you know. Everyone thought, I thought I looked great, my family
thought I’d got Aids, because I went the opposite, I went to under 9stone, to
try and get a six-pack.

I: Right, yeah

J: So I’d gone the other way. So I can see quite how easy that, you know. It’s
very fragile, the mental images, it’s very fragile.

I: Very fragile for men when they get into training to that extent?

J: Yeah, yeah, I mean, again, you could, with a few well chosen words, reduce
a twenty stone guy into tears.

I: How do you mean?

J: Well you could just criticise his physique. Erm, very much so. He probably
wouldn’t cry in front of you, but he’d be really upset. Vanity is tremendous,
you could say, a guy I know called Steve, “Hiya Steve, looking a bit fat”. I
could kill him, absolutely, might not be true, but that would absolutely...” no
I’m not, well I’m bulking up at the moment”. Very defensive, very, very err.
A group of body-builders together and it’s like a group of women. You know,
they’ll all be talking you know, “his arms aren’t looking very good, and his
hamstrings, yeah look at them hams yeah”, and it’s like a group of women, it’s
tremendous.

I: I know somebody who told me that just for a joke he said about a mate,
something about the weights and somebody had said “so er, what’s the”, they
were telling a new comer, “is this a good weight to train or something”, and
the guy said “yeah it would be normally, but it’s not for Andy it isn’t.
Obviously you can see it’s had no effect on him”, and he said he wouldn’t
have said it if the guy hadn’t been so well toned and that but this guy got
really, he was upset, not upset angry, upset emotionally, he believed he’d just
didn’t see it. And it’s quite fascinating.

J: It is, I think what it is sometimes, it’s when something becomes so
important to you it tends to take on a different perspective. It’s like all
consuming. We see this a lot with people we coming in, every person that
comes through the door that wants to buy a supplement wants to change
something about their body-shape. Generally this is what I class as a positive
change, I was once asked years ago as part of a, I was doing my institute of
sport recreation management fitness instructors certificate and a guy who ran
the course said,” why do people exercise, why do you train?” , and people put
their hand up, “to get fit, to get bigger, to get leaner”, everything, he said, “no
it’s simpler than that”, we weren’t, ten minutes trying to come up with some
biochemical reason why people train, he says,” it’s to induce a positive
change, you’re trying to change something about yourself that you feel will be
positive, losing weight, gaining weight, running faster, being better at a sport”.
And this is what made me think about taking things to a simpler phase, yeah
the reason you’re trying to do something, you think that by achieving that will
make you feel better about yourself, for whatever reason, the psyche is there.
And everyone who walks in and asks us for supplements or advice on training
is trying to achieve something. But it becomes all-consuming.

J: You said that when you started you’d had a motorbike accident, it sounds as
though it had been very serious and you put on a lot of weight.....

J: I was just in hospital for a long time and came out and had been paid while
in hospital and erm, kind of came out and just, ate pork sandwiches and pork
pies and drank beer.

J: So how did you decide to start training?

J: Erm, I’d had a pot on, a pot that ran from my ankle to my chest. And it was
to immobilise my right femur, so when I came out of hospital with this on I
had to buy some new trousers and a pair was 46 inch waist and a pair was 48
inch waist and when the pot came off but the trousers still fitted, and when I
realised that the 48 inch waist trousers were getting tight, then I thought I’m
going to do something about this. Fortunately the weight came off quite
easily, I didn’t have to, I didn’t know much about it, I started dieting, I just
used to run and used to do sit-ups and press-ups and all that. Gyms weren’t
136 popular, gyms were kind of heathen places like in someone’s cellar full of, it
137 wasn’t the popularity it is now, back in 1982. It was just beginning to get
138 popular, erm. I lost some weight, I don’t know what I went down to, but I felt
139 more normal and em, I think a friend of mine was training and I thought, “oh
140 yeah I’d like to build my shape up a bit”, joined a gym, Olympic health Club,
141 now defunct, and about a year later I was running it. I got a job there, left my
142 job, worked for them, did there instructors courses and about six months later I
143 was running it.
144
145 J: Yeah, I worked in retail, I worked in (major retailer).
146
147 J: But, so what, so why, what was it that led you to.....
148 J: I just kind of took to the training and the effects were kind of dramatic quite
149 quickly, erm, I made strength gains and shape gains and thought it was great,
150 and got that positive feeling that you get, and decided that I really enjoyed it
151 and the job that I was doing was, working in retail, major department store, it
152 was okay, I took drop in wages to do something that I thought I really enjoy
153 this. People that, I’d trained at the gym for eight months so I knew a lot of the
154 members and the staff so working there was like a holiday, it was great. I did
155 that for about two years and then I got married and needed to earn a lot more
156 money, I was basically a single man and not earning a great deal but having a
157 good life-style. So err, then I kind of stopped training then when I got
158 married and er, I didn’t train for about two years, two to three years.
159 J: Right, and what was that, was that easy to do?
160 J: Yeah, it was for me at the time because, erm, other things take priority, its
161 kind of like my brain probably works in priorities and that, something was a
162 bigger priority. I had a daughter within about a year of being married so that,
163 you know, that kind of took over. I put on a little bit of weight but nothing
164 excessive, just smoothed out, I wasn’t as tight as I normally was but I wasn’t
165 really too bothered. I got a decent job again in retail running a comic branch,
166 the money was quite good and erm things were going fine. That lasted about
167 four years. Towards the end of it the relationship started to break down so I
168 think I decide I was going to get fit again, whether there is a relationship
169 between that I don’t know, you know. Probably you think you want
170 something in your life that you have some control over or something that you
enjoy and everything else seemed crap, so I got back training again. And
that’s when I went back the other way...
right yeah...
I started dieting, and made myself quite ill.
How were you, when you say you started dieting........
I didn’t know much nutrition, and at that time the general belief was if
something works well then more must be better. So if you don’t eat you’ll
burn more body fat, I didn’t realise you’d lose as much muscle tissue and just
make yourself ill. I knew about training, but I never learnt anything like
nutrition. So I did that, as I said I nearly made myself ill so I stopped that. A
few months after that me and my wife split up, a mutual thing. And I went
back to live with my parents and err, I didn’t train again, I deliberately didn’t
train for some time, I’d realised that I’d, you know, I didn’t have control over
what I was doing.
What was it about not having control at the time? How do you........
Well I think that what it was, a case of I wanted to train but I didn’t really
know what to do.
Right, yeah...
I’m one of these people that I won’t take five sets to do a job I could do in
four, and if I can do it in three I’ll do it in three. So, I really didn’t know what
I was doing, and I realised that if I started training again I’d do the same again.
new very little about nutrition other than what I had read in a couple of body-
building magazines, and erm, I just realised that if I didn’t know enough about
it, either a) not do it or b) I’d better learn about it. I was...I’d been single
ever since, until I met Jill. Not married but half live together. But, then I got
into martial arts. I’d put a bit of weight on again, I judge myself by my
clothes and when my clothes become tight and uncomfortable I think right,
I’m not buying any more I’m going to lose some weight. So I tended to go be
not caring about going out and drinking what I wanted then suddenly I’d go
the opposite, and it would always be either or, it would rarely be a middle
ground. Either I’d be a total idle slob and not do anything or I’d be Mr Fitness
2000 and I’d be everything....
When you were going for that, the either or, and when you were wanting to
be fit again and lose the weight were you stopping, kind of, the social things as
well then, or rather the social thing maybe was the training.

J: Yeah, I just basically stopped drinking. I've always enjoyed a few beers. A kind of pub mentality, or as you equate, go out for a couple of beers and have a laugh, social kind of thing. So I'd either stop drinking or stop going out or cut the drinking down and then I'd just start training. And usually one thing would lead to another. I'd start training, start making progress, and then, instead of actually fancying going out for a beer or a meal I wasn't bothered because I'd seen the progress in my training. So I got onto that and I decide that there were no local gyms that I wanted to join, I took up Karate, I'd had a dabble at it some years ago but I took it up again and got into that for about four years. And didn't really train with weights, very little. About 28/29 I broke a couple of ribs training then I had my toes broke, and they kept breaking so I couldn't kick anymore. So I thought "what do I do", I was still running and doing bits and pieces, but everytime I'd throw a kick at someone if I didn't catch it properly my toe would click and it would break. So, nothing you could do about it. So I got back into the weights, with a friend of mine, we started training and there was no earth shattering revelation, I think I'd just read something about nutrition, so I started to read more about nutrition and the more I learnt about it the more it kind of fed the system, I wanted to learn more then. I was absolutely fascinated by it, so I started to delve into biochemistry and study as much as I can and talk to people, whatever, listen to everyone.
238I: And did that, I mean, I know a lot of people that err, friends and people that
239I've talked to find that because they start to learn about the biochemistry they
240can, it can lead them into thinking about food supplements and things as well,
241depending upon the training they are doing and what they want to do with that.
242Did you get into the supplements.
243J: Initially, not a great deal on the supplement side because, to be honest,
244about 13, 14 years ago there was very little. It wasn't a particularly, it was a
245growing market, but it wasn't as err, it was still a little bit underground and
246still a little bit, ohh that's protein powder, that's like steroids. There's magical
247potions that no-one knows a great deal about. America brought this forward,
248it is a 12 billion dollar industry in America the supplement industry. I read
249recently that they spend more money on food supplement research than
250NASA spends on space research.
2511: Wow, that's amazing...
252J: It's a massive, there's a company, just as a side piece, I'm not sure if it's
253Pindeco? Put a patent on a hormone in the body called Leptin, they know that
254it
255influences thyroid metabolism, and they know that there's a direct relationship
256between the amount of Leptin in the blood stream and the amount of thyroid,
257in other words the amount you body burns fat, and its something we evolved
258with to maintain body temperature and to be when your body goes into famine
259mode the levels of Leptin drop and the brain sends out signals that this is a
260possible famine and it alters all of the metabolism and they paid 20 million
261dollars for this name Leptin, because they know that once they crack it they
262know it will be the greatest fat burner, no-one will be fat anymore, you'll take
263a couple of tablets and you're body will naturally look at these levels, "oh
264yeah we need to burn more body fat", and it'll burn it. They don't know how
265it works yet, they know the letters but they don't know the language. But they
266just gone and paid 20 million dollars for this patent, so when they've
267eventually cracked it, it's there.
268I: Amazing
269J: So this is the kind of industry, to invest 20 million dollars that they don't
270really know, I mean, they may have already cracked it, and they may be going
271through field tests things like that for the safety of things. So the market is
massive and it is mainly American fed. And it’s coming over here now, so the supplements at that time, not particularly, I knew about proteins and things like that. I just thought that supplements were out of my reach. And I’d take a few bits and pieces.

I: So how did you know what to take, was that with your reading?

J: Yeah, I’d read quite a lot and I supposed I used to quite a lot of the body-building magazines, like Muscle and Fitness, and Flex and you’d read them and look at the adverts and, I was probably a little bit sceptical, but some of the articles were quite good and so I’d try some protein powders and bits and pieces. But I never used a great deal of supplements, until I worked for a supplement shop (name of shop), my supplement knowledge only started to pick up when I went to work for a company called (name given).

I: So how did you……

J: There’s a shop called (name of shop) at the bottom of the (area of town), I ran that shop for about two years. It’s in the same industry, along the same kind of lines, and, my partner worked there as well, part-time. I knew the manager and he knew I was a manager of a gym at the time (name of gym) and I had been for about three years, so I used to send people down to him and he used to knock 10 or15% discount off products. So I’d go in and buy a few bits and pieces, used them for about 18 months. I had a fall out with the gym owner and then left, and I asked him if he could give me any help give me a shout and about three months later he said I could do with help on a Saturday. So I started work there on a Saturday, then a Saturday and a Tuesday, Saturday, Tuesday, Thursday, then it was a Monday, and suddenly I was like running it. And that’s when I really started to learn about the supplement market. And also, erm, doing more and more research because you are just literally surrounded by it all day long. But I’d already got quite a good biochemical knowledge beforehand.…..

I: That was self-taught? Is that we try to be as honest as possible and we will tell people not to use

J: All self-taught yeah, yeah. I’ve never done any kind of, I mean I’ve read quite a few books then I decided to get a few books that the people who do the degree’s would read. There’s authors called McCargill & Catch, they write Sports Physiology books and they’re like the bible. So I’ve got like a library
of those at home and I've got things like sports nutrition, these (indicating pile of books) I've got another 10-12 like this at home, and I've read every one of them 2 or 3 times. So I'll sit and pore over something and, err, it was just that, I was just surrounded by them, the last three or four years now it's been 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Even on days of I'll sit and if I want to learn about something if I don't know how something works or, if I read something and you've got a result, and A and B but C and D seems to be missing and you suddenly jump to E it's like well where is the mechanism there. So I will try and, that'll stick in my head and I'll think "I want to know how this works, are they making this up, or is this a valid pathway", so I think right so I try to research into the bits that are missing and try and figure out so that, you know, but why.....I don't know, it's just that I'm curious and I just want to know. I suppose I'm one of those people that I don't like not knowing the answer.

And I like to be honest, so when, I think it's a very good selling point that we have at the shop is that we try to be honest as possible and we will tell people not to even buy supplements but to go away and eat food, go and eat some chicken, go and have some pasta, if you can't do that then come and buy a supplement. We had a reputation at (name of shop) me and Jill, for being honest with people, erm, just not giving them any bullshit, saying, "so well actually that doesn't work, if you take that supplement and your not having (can't hear) you just wasting your money."

I: How did the supplement, do you still use supplements?
J: Yeah, I do yeah
I: How do they fit into your general diet?
J: they're convenience foods...
I: How do you mean?
J: Primarily, most supplements are convenience foods. Supplement mainly, if you look at the dictionary definition of a supplement it is to kind of like, make up a short fall, in whether it's money or food or whatever, so say for example, there is a fairly standard guideline, but if someone wants to, training quite hard and they want to increase err, the muscle density or muscle size they would need to eat approximately a gram of protein per pound of body weight per day. That's at the very, very top end of the scale. Erm, (unclear) science says it's about 0.8 but we just round it off to a gram, to make it easy.
So someone weighs 200lbs, they would need to eat 200 gram’s of protein a day. So there’s protein in virtually all foods, some foods it’s very thick and dense in protein like chicken, some foods like bread or potatoes there’s some protein in there, so you’d need to sit down, write down what you need through the day, you can buy a little book from WH Smiths for about £4 that’ll give you the protein content of virtually every food in the world. Calculate it and if you’ve only had 160g of protein that day, you probably need another 40, so you can get that from a protein drink.

I: Okay, right...

J: If you decide, if you decided that you wanted to put some weight on and you’ve eaten as much as you can and you’re weight still isn’t going up it’s a simple law of physics that if you want to increase your weight you’ve got to take on more energy in the form of calories than the body burns off. So what I would say to you is right, have a drink that has got some protein in and what’s called carbohydrates, simple sugars, probably about 400 calories, 500 calories twice a day, a thousand calories a day of food into your diet and it’s going to tip the balance to put your weight up. By how much and how much is muscle tissue and what have you, that’s fine tuning but the general equation is sound, it’s called calories in versus calories out, it’s a simple energy balance and it’s unarguable it, no matter how you fudge the issues and this kind of supplement does this and this kind of supplement does that nothing will put your weight on until you are taking more energy onboard than you’re burning off.

I: And I guess, I’m wondering if some people assume that just by taking a supplement they’re going to start bulking out as well....

J: Yeah, they do.

I: And what happens if they are not training or not training properly and they’re taking the supplements?

J: Generally, again, it’s usually training is a stimulus for some kind of result, what you do there’s a simple, again this is where we keep it simple, everyone will talk about training and things like this and it’s quite simple, the body will respond to an overload stress. It’s a self-defence mechanism, you stress the muscle in a certain way, you overload it’s capacity, so you would perform an exercise that would tire you out, either the weight was too strong to lift.
anymore, so you weren’t strong enough, or you were doing lighter weights, more repetitions and you were too tired to lift the weight anymore, it was burning. Either way is overload, the muscle will respond, the muscle will go into like what they call a negative energy balance, in other words you use up some muscle, you’ve damaged the muscle fibres, you’ve used up some energy some proteins, if you’re at that level the muscle is now here (demonstrating) so what you have to do is increase your protein and food to bring yourself back up and the muscle overcompensates, it grows a little bit to adapt to that stress. If its been through fitness work you will get fitter and the muscle will store more energy, if it’s through strength work the muscle will try and increase the size of the fibre, thicken it, so that it actually has more mass and able to perform and exercise (can’t hear). It overcompensates for about 10-14 days, and then it starts to decompensate. So the idea is that you stress the muscle hard, you get your diet and nutrition in alliance you will then grow or get fitter, whatever you’re trying to do. If you’re not training there’s no stimulus, so, there’s no overcompensation, so generally people will just get fat.

I: Can I ask you about, going back a little bit about what we were saying about supplement sand I asked you about how that fits in with a diet and you mentioned the little book that you can get and how you lean calculate the protein and all the break down. How accurate are you in calculating your daily intake, I guess for some people it might go to sort of, your weighing everything as well, is that normal or....

J: Yeah, yeah. It’s easier now with food labelling, because most foods that you can buy will give you the calorie values. You see this is where people get confused, a calorie, they think that calories have some magic properties, and that there are fat calories and thin calories, a calorie is just the amount of
energy in the nutrient. As measured in what is called a Bom (?) calorimeter, in other words, you put a gram of the product into a vacuum combust it and work out how much heat it gives off, that’s how much energy there is in a product, so that’s how, ‘cos our bodies give off heat all of the time, so in relationship you’ve got like, carbohydrates have got like four calories of energy, proteins four, alcohol seven and fat has nine. There is actually a little bit more than that but we lose some of it in digestion, we won’t digest all of the food so they’re like rounded off figures approximately. So, they could calculate from you from erm, working out your heart rate and erm, muscle density and size, roughly how many calories of energy you would burn during the day to maintain body temperature, then they’d allow some for exercise, walking around, things like that and give you a rough total. So average male, whose not over-weight average density, things like that would probably want about 2,500 calories a day to maintain body weight, that’s an average. It doesn’t take into account genetics and things like that, but as an average it’s a baseline. Women are about 1900 calories, they have a bit less muscle tissue than men. So muscle tissue is active, this is the difference, muscle tissue even at rest burns 30 calories a day, a pound of muscle tissue at rest burns energy, a pound of body fat doesn’t do anything, burns about 2 calories, so the more muscle tissue you have the more fuel you need to maintain, because it is working all of the time. The biochemical reactions occur, heat is given off as by product, so when your body is doing something, like thinking your blood is pumping around, enzymes, the whole body is working transferring a piece of food from one state to another, there’s energy given off at all the different points and that energy, part of it is lost as heat and this is how the body works, so we don’t create heat directly, it is always a by-product. But you can roughly work out how much heat someone is giving off and how many calories someone needs to maintain weight so if the calories going in are 2500 and you’re burning 2500 your weight will stay the same.

I: And are some people……I mean, when I think about maybe you can do a calculation if you’re not gaining, if you’re training and not gaining weight you can work out how much you need to take in and….

J: Yeah…. 43
I: ...are some people going to extent of maybe weighing out exactly to the nearest gram.
J: Yeah...
I: ...the different foods...
J: Yeah, yeah, this is what, I mean, I've been as guilty as anyone else some years ago until I knew better. But yes, erm, bodybuilding is an exact science and changing your shape is a precise science because you are dealing with the laws of physics. Every reaction is quantifiable, it's there it can be measured it out, all you can do is probably guess the potential energy in a food. You don't know how well you are going to absorb it, you don't know how well the body is going to utilise the energy. There's only a potential energy, in a certain weight of food. So yes, a lot of people will weigh and again it's all part of this control, they're suddenly in control. We actually do diets for people. We sit down and we do peoples diets for them, and I ask them to fill in a food diary for me for about three or four days. So that I have an idea of what they are eating. I could work out the calories from that but I don't because we try to tell people not to look at the calories, because it is a waste of time. In so far as, like, you become obsessed with how many calories you are having.
J: And is that something that you've noticed...
I: Yeah, and it's a very, hmmmm.....it's a bit like shooting yourself in the foot really because you become obsessed with the calories, but you don't know enough about your metabolism to know how many calories you want. And it rules your life. You know, again we go and we make it simple and we tell people the idea is that every time you eat a small piece of food you will get a rise in body temperature as your body deals with that food. It takes energy to digest it, and your temperature will go up, hence a rise in metabolic rate, so the trick is to eat small regular meals all day long, if you are trying to lose weight you would eat smaller meals, if you're trying to gain weight you would eat bigger meals. But you would still eat with the same regularity. And then it's up to you to figure out, you know, we would give you guidelines the diets would include what to, the kind of foods to pick from for breakfast, the kind of foods to pick from for lunch, meals, things like that. In the evening we would say try and avoid high energy foods like rice, potatoes, pasta because you're
going to bed, you don't need to have energy then, you want that during the day. The body is always, your body fat stores are designed to provide heat, energy at rest and very little else, that's about at walking pace. Other than that they don't provide a great deal of energy, so there's always energy coming out of the fats, the body is always digging out of its fat stores to provide heat. So if there's energy always coming out, what we need to do is not put so much energy back in there if you want to reduce your body fat stores. So the idea is that so you take on board small portions because the body only puts food into the fat stores when either it has got too much in one meal or too much over a period of time, so it's only surplus nutrition that goes into the fat stores. So there's no such thing as fattening food, only fattening diets. If you're starving to death and have a plate of fish and chips you're not going to put weight on, so, there's no such thing as a fattening food only fattening diets.

1: That's fascinating, hearing this and thinking what you said about for some people they worry so much about it but don't have enough knowledge that it takes over their lives. How, in what way, how have you noticed....

J: It's obsession, you get people that erm, the saddest thing is when, the majority probably women who go on what we call a yoyo diet. They don't know how the body works, they don't know how the metabolism works, they don't understand the basic concepts. Number one, you've got to burn off more calories than you take on board. Once you've got that in mind the idea then is that again due to evolution, we are designed to survive famines we're superb at living through famines. An average person with not too excessive body fat would live for about forty days without, only water. If you're quite obese you'd probably live for seventy days. My body fat is about eight percent, I keep it quite low, average male is about 15, 8% is quite low, I'd probably live for about two or three weeks. So from a survival point of view I'm not a good prospect, because the body is still ready for this famine. So what you have to do, if you have someone who wants to go on a diet, say a young girl she wants to lose a few pounds, so goes on a diet, restricts her food and, there's a massive difference between calories coming in calories going out, so what happens is her body weight suddenly drops, she will lose a lot of fluid, what's called intestinal bulk, just food that's accumulates in the gut, up to ten pounds of what is called faecal matter will come out. The body initially
for the first week or so will start to use up body fat to make up the short fall of
energy, then after a while it thinks there’s not enough food coming in here,
again it uses it’s leptin hormones and one or two other things, right famine, I
need to reduce the, if I carry on giving energy out like this I will die, so I need
to reduce the metabolic rate, a pound of muscle burns 30 to 50 calories a day,
I’ll get rid of the muscle tissue, so you’re body starts to burn fat and muscle
tissue in equal proportions, so your weight comes down, but you are basically
running on a much smaller engine. Stop dieting six weeks later and if you
were getting fat before hand you are gonna’ get fatter even quicker, because
you have had a lower metabolic rate, ‘cos your body’s adapted to the lower
energy levels. So you’re only bringing in a thousand calories a day instead of
two-thousand your body has now learned to survive on a thousand calories.
So if you want to carry on losing weight you’ve then got to drop to seven
hundred and fifty calories, and the five hundred and you can’t do it. Anything
less than twelve hundred calories for a woman is, would make her ill.
I: When you talked about when you were training, errr, many years ago when
you thought you were looking great but your family could see that you’d lost a
heck of a lot of weight, is that what was happening?
J: That’s exactly what I went through. I’d get up in the morning, go running,
think yeah my body is burning body fat, I knew a little bit about it, as you say
a little knowledge is dangerous. I thought yeah, I’m burning body fat, so I’d
come home and just have a glass of water, won’t have any breakfast because
that’ll mean my body will bum a little more body fat. Then I’d probably walk
to work in town. Work all day and might just have, ooohhh, I also had this
other thing as well, zero fat, I wouldn’t eat anything with fat in it, which is
again not a good idea you need some fats, so I didn’t know anything about the
good fats only the bad fats. And then I might have something very light for
lunch, I actually thought it was quite good, you’d get quite a good feeling,
like, I’m in control of this, ‘cos you know anyone can go out to stuff there
faces but I’ve got more control. And then in evening have something to eat,
but not anything too food dense and then have very little then go to bed or
might do some more training. Any minute I’d do twenty press-ups and things
like that. Just to burn more calories, I didn’t understand that I needed to burn
off extra calories but not many. I did this for a while and as I say when people
544thought I was ill, and Aids was just becoming, not popular, prevalent, and
545people were like, “are you all right, have you got any…” because my face got
546gaunt. I went down to under nine stone.
547I: Do you see many, kind of, guys now coming into the shop say, and do you
548see many that you think you don’t understand the biochemistry.
549J: Yeah the ones that don’t understand the biochemistry are the ones trying to
550put weight on. They’re the ones that you mentioned earlier that assume that
551by taking a supplement that supplement the body will just magically make into
552muscle tissue. Again because they only see the end result they don’t see how
553the biochemistry bit. So that’s why they think that by taking a supplement that
554protein powder will automatically gonna’ make muscles. It’s through
555advertising and things like that that they have this idea that is going to happen.
556And we are saying no it’s not.
557I: I mean it’s obviously something that more and more men are doing,
558wanting to do and maybe, worryingly not knowing enough about. And I guess
559I’d like to move on a bit and ask you what, I guess I’m really interested to
560know what your opinion is, why people do it, but also why, what keeps you
561motivated now, too carry on training, keep the physique that you have?
562J: That’s a good question. It’s personal pride, erm, it’s because sometimes, I
563suppose I can be a bit bloody minded about things and, I still get a sense of
564satisfaction, I enjoy training, there is a certain endorphin release, there’s a
565certain feeling you get after a work-out, and I know hard it is to train when
566you feel like you’ve had a hard day and just want to go home, but that’s easy.
567I don’t know what the percentage is but probably about ninety percent of the
568population do that, that is so easy and it’s like no, I’m going to make the
569effort. So, but I actually enjoy it and, one of the things, I used to kid myself I
570didn’t enjoy, but I do like, I’m forty-two in March, and most people don’t
571think I am as old as I am.
572I: I was quite surprised when you said that.
573J: And that’s largely genetic. All my family are all quite young looking,
574father, most of uncles are dead, but lived until there nineties and looked in
575about sixty when they died so it’s quite genetic. And I don’t want to get fat
576again, I don’t like it, I don’t feel good about myself and I mainly train for that.
577But it is also, a lot of it is the application of the job we do. We don’t think it is
very good to be a personal trainer talking about gaining shape doing this and doing that when we are not doing it ourselves. We are walking adverts, especially in summer time, because we are walking around in vests and people will come in and say, actually I want to look a bit like you or......

I: And how does that feel when people say that?
J: It's great, I must admit there's a lot of self-esteem and I suppose part of my brain is logical enough to know that well, alright Jim if you have an accident and you can't train ever again how are you going to feel about yourself?, and it's something that I have sat and thought about and I'll feel fine because then it won't be in my control, so I'll accept it, I'll go and do something else. I tended to get into things, so if I wasn't into training I'd probably think right that's it this is no longer important to me, this is, and I would, you know. I don't play at anything really I suppose, I'm one of those that if I get into something I, this is one of the things, I like boxing, I have to be careful because once I start boxing I'll forget the weights get boxing because I enjoy it then I'll get into that and then, so I tend to, you know, shoot off at different angles. But it, it's, most importantly it is a feeling of self-worth and probably control, the fact that I am doing something that is hard, you know, if it was easy I wouldn't do it, but...

I guess, it sounds like there is something about recognising that you're doing something that the majority of the population, I guess could do, but really pushing yourself to do that.

J: Yeah, I think a lot of it was, from years ago, I set off, was a confidence thing. The fact that if I could look in shape, look muscular then that would give me confidence, almost like, I'm better than you because 'cos I'm in better shape, and I think I set off with that and I don't think that in the slightest about anyone now. But I think some years ago there was a certain arrogance of, look at me, you know, kind of “chest is better than you....fatty, I train”....
sports specific, they have a particular target, become a professional boxer, the volleyball team I work with things like that, they are sport specific, so they are training their motivation is sports specific not really image conscious. Mine was just image, it really was. I mean I kidded myself, but really I wanted to try and be more confident about myself and I thought, that the fact that I had been so overweight and I really didn’t like myself,

I: And at the time that you were thinking like that, is that how it works, say you were down the pub and what have you did you feel bigger and....

J: Yeah, yeah definitely..

I: And did it seem like people were noticing?

J: Yeah

I: How was that?

J: It was definitely a feeling of self-confidence, you know, it’s like erm, if I was like in shape I used to, well I still do wear, one of the things I’m conscious of, yeah, you’ve made me think, it’s my height. I’m only five foot eight and I’ve always wanted to be about, my brother is five foot ten, most of my family are about six foot, so I’ve always felt small. And all my friends that I used to knock around with were all six foot, one was six foot seven, the others were six foot two so I was like this little midget guy walking around, so I think that was a little bit to do with it, I’ve always felt a little bit on the small side and I’m one of these that if I wear a jumper I just look small but if I’m small and I’ve got a tight T-Shirt on then it’s like, I’m a bit different, I’m not part of the crowd. I am just a little bit different. And I think that had a lot to do with, gave me like, erm, a lot of self-confidence. But I think at the time I was a little bit obsessive, because I knew all about training but I didn’t know about nutrition. So I’d drive myself like an idiot trying to achieve a body-shape that I would never get. So I’d stop for a month while my body recovered and then I’d be off again, doing it again.

I: What do you think about, I mean, you see a lot of people coming into the shop obviously, and wanting to train and clearly a lot of people talk to you a lot of guys come in and maybe, err, thinking about it for the first time and I, I’m interested in what you think their motivation is, we talked a little bit about body-image and male body-image concerns,

J: Yeah...I think.......I think a lot of people, initially they will tell
they kid themselves, there is a lot of self-delusion I see a lot of people
well I just want to get a bit fitter, fitter for what, I just want to get a
bit fitter, or be a bit healthier, and I'm no you don't, you want a six pack,
"okay, I do then". And ultimately, again they are trying to change something
about their shape. I think it depends on the type of culture they come from,
Jill mentioned this, our biggest thing is young Asian males, it's phenomenal.
They walk in, they are naturally a very lean race, it's like afro-Caribbean's
naturally muscular, much less body fat, they naturally have muscles that most
guys have but are not apparent, they don't train, it's just a genetic thing. But a
lot of the Asian races are naturally very thin, but they, we know this because
we have some very close friends in the Asian society, and, so I asked them
deliberately, theses guys are in their late twenties, so they tell us what they
were like as kids, and it's the same kind of thing. It's very much a male
dominated culture, and very much a machismo, macho kind of thing, you
know, kind of like you know, I've got bigger muscles, therefore I must have a
bigger penis. So whether it's like penis size or whether they just can't with
more muscle you know. It's unbelievable that the number of erm, and this sort
of makes you think about evolution and colourful displays in male creatures.
See they don't fight anymore, we don't go out and fight other people to win
prizes or females or whatever, it's no longer survival of the fittest or strongest,
it's kind of like whose the best looking, so I've got bigger muscles so
therefore I'm going to be better. The other thing you will probably find, it's
invariably this, they'll come in and talk and say, well, how much can you
bench then, how much can I lift on a bench-press, and I say I dunno about
thirty pound full-width, which is only a joke, we don't bench-press, erm, and
it's kind of like whose the best looking, so I've got bigger muscles so
this is the same thing and its kind of you know, and it's the same in gyms, like,
how much can you bench-press then, what can you dead-lift, how much can
you squat, it's all this competitiveness of kind of like, well I'm stronger than
you, I'm better than you, you know, but I think a lot of it is like an outlet for
testosterone production or something like that, that we no longer have the
violence in the society that we had, erm
And do you think that is something that's developed fairly recently, have
you seen more and more guys concerned about how they have looked..
Yeah, massively so, yeah. We were talking recently about this and, you'll
get guys now using erm, being much more concerned about their appearance whereas ten years ago, it was like “(can’t hear)...like a big poof”, whereas now, like, you know male moisturisers, male this kind of thing, it’s suddenly, people are taking more care of themselves, are more aware, whereas there was this very much a masculine male kind of, there was a definite divide between male and female and I think now the whole society is very androgynous. So there is no longer this dividing line, there is this kind of fuzzy area, and I think people are being brought up now, that this male machismo, kind of copying your father, you now, working down the pit or working in the steel-mill, a few pints on a Saturday and a punch-up, is no longer the thing to do. It’s, it’s, maybe society has got a bit more intelligent, I don’t know, but it’s, I certainly think that the more intelligent the society then the more, the finer line between society is gay or straight or whatever, doesn’t seem to matter because people are more reasonable about it all, more reasoning. The less intelligent it is either or, and I think that there’s a certain, a lot of body-builders have the same image, oh, people could shoot me in the head for this I suppose, I think that a lot of this relates to the intelligence of the person who is training. Some guys are quite intelligent and can reason things out for themselves and you can talk to them, and you know they are listening. And you get other guys we know straight away that they, whatever end of the social ladder they are from, or they haven’t had the same social upbringing, although the guys, we have a lot, well a few of the guys have done time in prison and what have you and they’re not particularly well educated, so a lot of the time it is difficult for them to actually logically work out why they want to do something, or they have this, “I wanna be a bigger”, but they can’t figure out, how can I put it, exactly why, or what methods, they just want to lift weights and get bigger. And you try and tell them that doing what you do know won’t work because you’re just training too hard, you’re not allowing time for recovery and growth of muscle. “Arr, I just like lifting weights though”, and we get a lot of this, but someone who is a bit more intelligent you can put to them why that’s, why they’re not getting the results they want and they’ll understand it. Others just dismiss it. And it’s easy for them to kind of, “he’s a bit thick him, he doesn’t know what he is talking about so ignore him”, we get a lot of this, “well my mate down pub he can bench-press this, and he just takes these steroids and he
does all this”, and well, that’s one way of doing it, but there’s other ways, you
know. So sometimes I think it depends on the intelligence of the, there’s a
definite line, I think if you were to plot a line on a graph I think you’d see a
definite curvilinear response to intelligence and preconceived ideas about
training.

I: But at either end, if you like, there is some concern about how they look?

J: Yes,

I: About, well, I think it is really interesting what you said about this blurring
of boundaries, particularly gender boundaries, that is really interesting. And
certainly, that is very noticeable I think…

J: Yeah definitely, I have a client that is great, a boxer, and he wont ever box
again now because I’ve trained him because he has put about two stone in
weight on, all muscle and he loves his new physique, and he’s shaved his chest
and things like that and he likes to walk around in a tight T-shirt and he loves
it. And he admits it, I think it’s great, whatever makes you feel good and he
wont box again because he would have to drop about twenty pounds of muscle
to fight at his weight that he fought at, he said, “I’m not fighting again, I like
my shape”.

I: Do you ever see guys that get to that size, that shape, that physique but for
some reason are still not satisfied?

J: Yeah, I think, no-one’s ever really satisfied. There’s very few people that
erm, that, I say very few people. I think it depends how important the
training is for you. I said at the beginning that you can lose yourself in what
you are trying to achieve, you don’t look at where you were, you look at
where you want to be, and you’ll get some guy and he can look phenomenal.,
and like I said, and he will always pick on something, you’ll say, “you’re
looking good”, and he’ll never say “yeah I am aren’t I”, they never say that,
it’s always, a bit self-deprecating, “yeah thanks, but I still need to train…..”,
there’s always like a little but with these guys, always, and I think

I: What’s that about?

J: I think a lot of it is kind of like, they don’t like receiving compliments, it
may not be, this could be a manly kind of thing, it’s not nice to receive a
compliment. You know its

I: Like saying, “god you’re looking great, you’re looking really tight” and very
few will say thanks, I thought I was, you know, because that is like admitting that they are training for vanity.

I: Right.....

J: That’s admitting that they looked in a mirror and they are liking what they see. That maybe not very manly.

I: But it sounds like that is a motivation, but to admit it is difficult.

J: Oh I’m quite convinced that the motivation, if you actually sat down and examined the motivation is virtually always vanity. Where they are just training for appearance, like I say, sometimes where they are training for a particular sport, that their appearance is a side effect because of the way that they train.

I: But for some guys they are training for the vanity but it sounds like what you are saying is that for most guys, while they might, a lot of them might know that yeah they look good, but, I can look a bit better.

J: But they won’t admit that they look good. That means then, like I say, that they are training for pure aesthetics and that they look in the mirror all of the time. And I must admit I like to, it would be very easy to do nothing and put weight on I’d still be the same person, my brain would be the same I still know the same, for part of it is me being bloody minded the other part is the fact that I actually do like, and I feel more confident about myself when I feel in-shape. When I feel that I have achieved the shape that I like. But the last couple of years, I am more at ease now with my shape. If I have a bad work-out I don’t get upset about it, I used to one time, I’d kick the door or something, suddenly you get bad work-outs you know that sometimes you’re body fluid levels change so you look smoother some days than others, but it is definitely a kind of, I look at it and think, last august before I set the shop up, I was in the best shape I’ve ever been. I was about eleven, six, very lean and I got the muscles exactly and I thought yeah, again I could have been a little bit better, there’s always something that could have been better, that little bit of perfection, that you never, ever achieve, and I felt quite confident about myself, it’s like yeah, a culmination of all the effort I’ve put in, making the effort and this is the result. It’s what I wanted, then we set the shop up and I didn’t train for about six weeks, we didn’t eat either, and while I’m still in shape I’m not as I was, but I’m not particularly concerned at the moment.
because I’m still in shape and I’m trying to balance, so err...

I: Do you think at the moment you are muscular, it might be relative and relative to people that you work with, but I’d say generally?

J: Yes, yes I am, there’s no two ways about it, erm, like I say at the moment I am only about ten stone ten, so I’m about six to eight pounds short so I’ve lost on mass but I’m still quite lean. I get what, I was always obsessed with getting a six-pack, I thought that was the ultimate to have, the six pack. I finally developed it about eight or nine years ago and I won’t ever let go of it now (laughs), so that’s one of the things that stops me from putting a lot of weight on or mass, because sometimes you have to over-eat to such an extent that you put fat on as well as muscle tissue, it’s just the physiology of it, and I won’t do that, so, erm, but I like to keep it in proportion. I don’t want to be like what we call in the trade what is called a carpet carrier..

I: Right, yeah, I quite like that, yeah

J: And, but yeah, if I go in the gym, apart from someone that I would class as a professional body builder there’s very few people that have got my balance and symmetry. Even though I’m only small, I’m not going to be fool enough to admit that you know that……., I can go in any gym and people will say oh he’s in shape, I know that for a fact, but it’s not something that, when I go in the gym now I’m more interested in watching other people train…..

I: Right…..Is that a professional interest?

J: Yeah…..professional interest, like, what’s he doing. Most of the time, 99% of the time it’s like, that’s not right, you’re not doing that right, you’d be better……but I don’t work in the gym so…

I: Yeah…

J: But a lot of it is just like a professional interest and that. Occasionally I’ll see someone doing something and think “oh that’s good,”, I have a look at it and see how they do it. I’m always trying to work out angles and movements and really isolating certain muscles to develop, just to increase our knowledge so that when we, we have our own method of training which we won’t teach anyone no-one unless they’re paying us as a client. And it’s what we’ve developed over the last ten years and we don’t tell anyone, we don’t teach anyone but we get good results with it, so it’s kind of, it’s not really a secret, it’s just methods that we’ve learned to isolate muscles that not text book. So,
we do watch people. Most of the time it’s like, “that’s an accident waiting to happen”, if you keep doing that, we laugh, but only ‘cos we’ve done it ourselves. There’s exercises that we’ve done that you just don’t do, but we did them years ago, and we pulled, between us, about every muscle in the body. So we’ve done it all wrong, so we can look down our noses a little bit. But only because, you know

I: I’m conscious that you’re....

J: No, no.....

I: It’s really fascinating talking to you, and hearing this. Can I just ask you one....

J: Yeah...

I: ..area you touched on. About some guys thinking, when we were talking about supplements, some guy thinking that they can just take supplements.

You said about the guys that, “my mate takes a few steroids and bench presses and that”, do you get many people asking about steroids?

J: Everyone wants to know about steroids, it’s really fascinating talking to you, and hearing this. Can I just ask you one....

J: Yeah...
couldn’t do naturally. So you get the two types, the ones who think it’s the easy option and you get the ones who think, again, it’s the easy option because it’s quicker, they’re prepared to train hard but they just want the (can’t make out on tape). So erm, and then the others you get are the guys that do train and take the steroids because they want to be bigger, in some cases it’s useful, get a lot of doormen who will go on steroids because they need the mass. A lot of these guys need to be 17, 18 stone, probably it’s peer pressure because everyone in the gym takes it. You know, they see a guy that’s probably only 13 or 14 stone lifting tremendous amounts of weights and think, “that’s good”, you know...
I: Like a comparison thing going on?
J: Yeah competitiveness, and then you get the other side that’s quite derogatory, “ah well he’s only doing that because he’s taking steroids”, or they have a fantastically chiselled physique, “oh, he’s only got that through steroids”. He hasn’t, he’s got that through hard training, but the steroids have helped. If someone, for example a natural athlete, trained say three times a week quite intensively and it would be recover and grow. Someone on steroids could train five or six times a week very intensively because the muscle can recover much quicker.
I: So it’s about recovery...
J: It’s more about recovery rate and things like that, if you can work out some growth. So someone on steroids, even if you didn’t train you’d get a slight increase in size and mass, a slight result and you would put weight on, but nothing like if you actually had a training stimulus to help promote it more. So you get these different camps of people that, why they want to take steroids, and I have been asked dozens of times erm, I have a few friends that I know deal in steroids so I’ve passed on numbers and that.
I: Do you have an opinion on it, a position on it...
J: We don’t, we don’t, because I know the biochemistry that it’s not the option people think it is...
I: Yeah
J: … my only time is that erm, for example, I have no problem with anyone taking steroids and quite a few customers have come in and asked my advice because they’ve heard about this and heard about that, or they’re taking...
something. Often it is the side-effects that they are worried about, a lot of the side-effects are quite severe, there’s a lot of myth again about the side-effects, so they’ll ask about it, say “I’m taking this steroid, what’s the side-effects of it?”, and I’ll try and explain what I know. We don’t have a problem with people taking steroids as long as the people they’re competing against are also taking steroids. In body-building you have two types of shows. You have a natural show where the athletes have to be either free for ever, never taken a steroid or any other banned substance, or erm, they’ve been free for about seven or ten years. That’s a natural show. Then you get what is called an open show, where no-one ever asks any questions. So those people, difference in size, erm, a natural body-building show will be about fourteen stone and a steroid show will be anything up to twenty stone.

Prize money in America, natural $10,000, World, the Olympia is the equivalent of the world cup, first prize $250,000, a house, a Winnebago, car and a sponsorship deal worth about five million. Natural, what do you want.

I: There’s motivation in itself, but also it’s sending out a big message really.

J: The other thing that might help people if they want to get into this, and strangely enough this is where the steroids really come in about whether they are addictive physiologically or psychologically, but we tell people that for every body-builder that you see in that magazine there are thirty or forty others, at least, for every one that has only made it as far as the gay porn industry. ‘Cos to get there you’ve got to get the drugs. In America the average guy, he averages probably the top body builders average $60,000 in drugs, that’s got to be paid for. So either a sponsor pays for it or they’ve got to do it themselves, and the gay porn industry pays it. Often they don’t partake in it just stood around in it, ‘cos of there physiques, so it’s a massive industry, so. But no we don’t have a problem with, ‘cos I know it’s not the easy option, any guy who is steroids he’s gonna put mass on but he’s got to train hard, he’s probably going to train harder than people not on steroids. ‘Cos he’s probably going to train twice a week more than someone not doing.

So to me it’s not really, I suppose....it’s cheating in one sense, but proper cheating to me is to go in for surgery and have pec. implants and bicep implants and calf implants, that’s cheating. That’s what I class as a cheat because they’ve not put any effort into that. You know at least these guys, I
think, I don’t have a problem with them in the slightest, and I must admit that
if I actually decided that I wanted to, for some strange reason wake-up one
morning and think that I want to be thirty stone I’d contact a few friends and
I’d be taking steroids, because I know naturally I’m only about eleven and a
half, twelve stone, naturally. But I can never see that happening because I
don’t have the urge to be big. I don’t look at the big guys and think “Oh wow
what a physique”, because to me it’s a fairly useless kind of thing, I mean
these guys get tired running upstairs. I look at like gymnasts and boxers, the
athletic, you know, kind of thing. Good shape and it’s fit, that’s the kind of
’cos I associate with that rather than associate with body-builders, but…
I: That’s really interesting, it’s been absolutely fascinating talking with you.
Do you think there’s anything that we haven’t talked about that you think,
would be interesting or I would need to know?
J: Err, no. I think, it depends on, you’re probably going to look at……the
kind of people that train that are sports specific as opposed to the kind of
people that just train for their own enjoyment. Training is addictive as well,
you may find there as some people who get addicted to exercise, there’s a
name for it, and I forget and women mainly suffer it more than men. ( can’t
make out) five or six hours a day ‘cos it makes them feel good…. I: The endorphins?
J: Yeah, it’s like the endorphin, it’s almost like a form of anorexia, it’s like
control thing, and there’s been quite a few documented cases of people, and I
think the ones I’ve read have been mainly female addicted to training, but
there’s always an underlying reason. And I think that the same way that
someone goes out and buys a flashy coat or something like that to make a
statement about themselves, they don’t know why they want to make the
statement they just feel that they should do, and I think that training to a
degree is like that. A lot of people they want to get a bit healthier, some
people will start to do some weights, or a lot of people want to lose a bit of
weight, we’ve got a lot of people that want to train with weights because they
feel unhealthy fat and want to lose some weight, that’s one thing. I’ve got one
client at the minute who is eighteen stone and he needs to be about fourteen so
I’m training him because he wants to lose weight, erm, because the way he is
going now at (age given ) he won’t see forty. So that’s a health issue, and he
is not bothered about his body or shape he just knows he wants to lose weight. So that’s one side, but I think that the average person that trains for no real reason is doing it to improve their, their self-confidence, for whatever, there’ll be a reason behind that which they may not look at but that would be like, you’re doing it because you want to feel better about yourself, and they will kid themselves, “no I wanna’ be healthier”, but there is that. Some men will be quite open about it, others are, will not admit it. But as I say, a lot depends on the gym cultures, you get different, a good one to ask is the kind of culture the person comes from in the gym. If you get something like (name) health club very few free weights, all fitness equipment all machines you will get Mr Average trainer there. Trains a little bit, wants to keep in shape, doesn’t want, his waist line is expanding you know, mid-thirties, thinks well I’d better start doing something. And it’s a social thing, go and look at a few women while he’s training and just generally keep it as a social, it’s something to do and it makes him feel good about himself. The second one is basically the bear-pit, where they kind of, the little gym in someone’s, sprung –up, school basement somewhere, heavy weights, there’s muck and stuff on the floor, but you’ve got some of the greatest, biggest body-builders going, ‘cos they’re going in there, don’t care what the surroundings are it’s not a social thing, they are going in to lift weights.

I: Yeah, that’s interesting, thinking about the culture of the....
J: So there will be a reason as to, like I say, sometimes in the hard-core culture that’s where the steroids are. Places like (named health clubs) there’d be very little in there because it is primarily fitness. That’s the place where probably you, you, I think both probably to a degree have a bit of vanity involved in why, but the driving force might be, you know, the sweat-shop bear-pits kind of thing, or pure competitiveness or aggressiveness of males that want to lift weights and compete with their mates, lifting weights and just looking bigger and harder, that’s a little bit of vanity. By one back door, but the other side at (named health clubs) is vanity by another one, it’s a social kind of thing, “cos I train and look after myself”, and being a bit of a modern man kind of thing, so I think they’re both coming from the same, I think if they got talking they’d both find they’ve got a lot in common.
I: they wouldn’t like to admit that I bet.

J: they wouldn’t, you know, but one the bear pit, they’d say “I’m not training in that poofy place, that’s all girls to train in”, it’s very macho kind of, you know. Probably, there’s probably as many gay people in there, the guys are probably latent homosexuals and daren’t admit it, they just wouldn’t even dare look down that road because it’s, you know. They’d lose that much self-confidence that you know, people base themselves on what they think they are and a lifestyle, to suddenly think well I’m gay Christ well that’s, you know, so they wouldn’t even look down there. But it’s sometimes easy to have a go at other people, “they’re gay” and what have you, you know. But I think to be honest if you, if you were to analyse one and analyse that and look at them probably quite a lot of similarities in the transcript that they train for, that you’d look behind for, they’d give you a reason, but if you learned to look behind that reason you could probably come up with a common denominator.

I: Hopefully that’s what I might find, yeah...

J: But I think that society is one of the main things that I think you will find now is that society is relaxing a lot and there is no longer this dividing line, and body image is something that is male image and yeah wanting to look better.

I: Thank you very much, that’s just so interesting.
Transcript Three
I: As I say, it’s up to you really how long we talk for, and if we get to 45 minutes obviously we’ll know from the tape, so I can turn that over if you want to carry on. I guess what I’d like to start with really, is just asking you about your training, what do you do?

T: Well it’s just a general sort of body building-type regime that I have, training on, training muscles four times a week, and cardio twice to three times a week or a little bit more, based on six days at the gym and one day off, for a complete rest. Erm, and it, I, train each body part through that period of the week, erm, if I feel something needs building up a little bit more I put more emphasis on that, on one of the days which I leave free, ‘cos that’s a, and that’s just like a general sort of, you know, a general, general sort of body-building time.

I: But to reach each day you say you’re working on the muscles, for each day you concentrate on a muscle area, and

T: That’s right, yes, so that, both, I’ve brought my body down to like four, four particular areas training, which most people do, I would think, and that’s, you’ve got your chest, your back, your legs, your arms, shoulders, arms and shoulders particularly together. So that those areas get, you know, and you do pushes and pull, you know, pushing parts and pulling parts and there’s really not, OK, so you rest in each part so if you pack in in your back you tend to pull, and your chest you tend to push, so I mean, you’re doing ‘em separate several times, which erm, it becomes interesting, when you know, I mean, what particular day you do what and I keep a record of everything that I do, weights, what weights, how many reps, triple weight, body fat, erm

I: Is that a training diary?

T: Well, I do keep, I keep the odd kipping down at the gym nights, it’s just a sheet of, that they devise, I don’t keep a particular, a book or anything, it is, yes, you could call it a diary, and it’s, that’s interesting ‘cos you look back over a period, if you don’t think you’re getting anywhere, and you look back over a period of six months and find I have made some improvements here. Not, not visually, probably, you know, really. You don’t tend to, I don’t tend to see myself changing that much. Like people, if they haven’t seen you in over a period of a couple of months, friends, that I don’t see, say gosh you’ve changed a bit.

I: Why?
T: You know, erm, well you look well, or you look rough, usually you look rough, but erm, so what's that like?
I: So if some one says, who hasn't seen you for a while, and says you're looking, wow, you're looking good, what's that like?
T: Well, it's just, I don't know, I take it as a compliment, I suppose, and what I'm doing is a, is a means to an end, I suppose. Erm, I don't really think about it that much, you know, 'cos, sometimes it's just something you say in life, you know, right, but, er. No, I don't know.
I: What if it happened the other way, if someone kind of said, ah, you've kinda lost it.
T: I'd be concerned. I'd probably be concerned, yes, I don't know. Erm. It depends which, who it was. You know, erm, some friends I've got are really, you know, are real friends. But people who are just acquaintances, then, you know. But if it were the group that I knock about with down at the gym, who are, you know, wind-up merchants, you know, you can talk people into feeling ill and, you know, that sort of thing. So if it was them I'd take no notice, but if it was the other friends and they became concerned then you know, I'd, you know, I'd pass that. I mean, at one stage I was over a stone lighter than I am now, and, and didn't see myself other than being me, but when you see a photograph then you think, god, I'm erm well you know, your face has dropped, kind of. I'm a stone heavier now, I've been a little bit heavier that that as well, but, yes, I'm where I want to be at the moment, you know, so, but yes, it has happened.
I: So how did that happen then?
T: I went a bit mad. I've been training for such a long time, I mean, around about 1990-ish, and erm, I trained then, it was different, I wasn't really into it, the sort of body-building side of it, I was more into just a fitness really, running and, er, what have you, and I lost too much, I did lose a lot of weight, you know. But we was still physically fit, then, quite, you know, still strong but, erm, probably a little bit under weight for my height and size, erm, and what have you.
I: And other people had noticed.
T: Oh, people had noticed, you know. I, I hadn't, so much noticed. I'd probably looked in the wrong areas, you know. I was still looking around my stomach thinking, god, I'm still fat round there, a bit, like, you know, I noticed that, you know, face and shoulders, and that's when things get interesting.
I: How do you mean?

T: Well because then you've got a battle with your body, to get, to get it how you
want it to be, erm. So, say, if you want a six pack you erm, you've got to lose
your face, you know, the features in your face and things like that, and around
your shoulder area. It's no good just losing weight, you've then got to adapt your
diet and training regime to match what you're trying to do. Well, that's how I see
it anyway.

I: Yes.

T: Which is.

I: So how did you learn about that?

T: Magazines, books, talking to nutritionists, talking to ex, you know, body-
builders, old body-builders, people who have, you know, 50 year old body-
builders that I have met in my time, like, and, people that you see and think, well,
they're similar to me, that's how I probably want to be. How do, how do they get
there, and that's one way I've done it. I'm not frightened to ask somebody if I see
them doing something, to ask them why they're doing it, and what results they are
getting from it, and you tend to get information, like, if you're, you know, can
pass on, well I do anyway. If somebody asks me, asks me, I'll pass on
information to them and help them, you know, tell them where I am and what I'm
doing, if I feel it's working, and things like that.

I: So in 1990 then, when you were training but, like you said, not body-building
training, generally training, it sounds like you hadn't, you didn't know about
these.

T: No, no, I mean, 'cos I, I mean I since, from leaving school till 1986 I played,
I'd played football twice a week, twice competitively, competitively in any rate,
I'd trained for football through the week so it was all really based around football,
amateurs, you know, amateur level and, so, it didn't really come to it, just
generally keeping fit, and of course, I was getting on, the younger lads were
coming through and I just kept going, you know, kept running and things, through
summer, so that when we came back to pre-season I was, I was up and running,
you know, with the rest of them, and so I've always looked after myself in that
way and the rest of it has just developed over, over that period, you know, 20
years, -ish.

I: So it's about 20 years that you've been.
T: Well, I’ve always, from, well just had training from being at school, see what it’s like, you know, it is, it’s been yes, 20, let’s count -30 years.

I: And is that, that hasn’t been body-building.

T: Not body-building, no. That’s something that’s developed over the last two or three years really.

I: Oh right, oh.

T: I’m really new to it, even though I still, I’m still earning from week in, week out, things. You know, some scientific thing I read, and you think, ah like, so yes, so it’s the most difficult thing I’ve ever done, I think, I find.

I: How, difficult?

T: Well, difficult to, you know, in balancing erm nutrition and, and exercise. I’ve never bothered with nutrition before, well, I have, I’ve always had a low fat diet but low fat doesn’t really come into it. You need fat, and you need an, an accurately balanced diet, which is very difficult.

I: It sounds as though the nutrition, after what I’ve heard from other people, nutrition is really important.

T: The nutrition is the most, I would think, is probably, just as an amateur, is probably 75 to 80% of the problem you’ve got, is nutrition. And it’s expensive, and it’s, it’s erm, time consuming.

I: How do you mean?

T: Preparation of food, things like that. See I’m a lorry driver by trade, so I carry all my food with me, ‘cos, you know, greasy spoons don’t do protein. So I take everything that I need, so I have a fridge in the cabin, pre-pack everything at home the night before if I’m on a two-day trip I take two days provisions with me and that.

I: And that’s provisions that you’ve specially prepared, you know.

T: Tupperware King, I’m the Tupperware King. I have Tupperware coming out of my ears.

I: When you say you prepare it, tell me a bit about that, I’m not sure what you mean.

T: Well, so, yes, I mean I’m pretty basic, I have a pretty basic diet because I don’t, I’m not, I can eat the same thing day in day out, so there isn’t … I prefer, say, when we’re really training I, erm, I have four meals a day at work, and one meal, two meals at home. So the formulas I take with me I split into like,
carbohydrate early, early hours, and then the proteins building up, up to the
afternoon, getting ready to go to the gym later, and er, I take say like in a
morning, before I set off I always have like an oatmeal, or a porridge, or
something like that, and a couple of other things, that are a protein shake with that
and then, erm, I prepare er a rice and chicken dish, with tomato, cucumber, things
chopped and made quite easy to eat, in a package and then I’ll have a tuna fish
mixed with beans, sweetcorn, erm, and I have tow of those through the day and
then an extra, if I’m taking more carbs in, an extra carbohydrate, say, pineapple
and chilli sauce or something like, just to get the carbs in, and with that I take
protein mixes and things.

I: Right. How do you know that you’re getting the balance right? I mean, are you
actually, are you weighing everything out.
T: I did initially because I needed to, you know, so I did the initial calculations of
protein, carbohydrates, fat,
I: What do you mean ‘you needed to’?
T: Well, so that I knew how many calories I was taking in, I mean, I’m eating like
4000 calories a day.
I: Yes.
T: I need to get close to that, and I need to do it in a split, so you’ve got, say, erm,
I usually go in something like er, er, a 60, 20, 20 split, so you’ve got 60
carbohydrate, 20 protein, 20 fat. But I tend to do, like a 60, 30, 10, so it’s 60
carbs, 30 protein and 10 fat. It’s probably a little bit more on the fat side, but I’m
a bit paranoid about fat from going back, er, to the 90s, and that type of diet, so
I’m still not convinced about the fat side of it, but anyway, erm, so and then I’ll
alter it if I need to, erm, alter it, so there’s less carbohydrates at the moment, I’m
taking less carbohydrates, more protein and I’m doing more exercise ‘cos I’m
trying to burn a little bit of fat off, that I think I’ve put on over the last six months,
‘cos I’ve had a period of putting on weight, in the last six month.
I: And that’s putting on weight as ...
T: Hopefully muscle, as muscle, but er and I do have a fat monitor. They’re not,
they’re not brilliant, but they just keep you within that, you know, I don’t want to
be above 15% body fat, so I keep a check on me, me body fat content.
I: What do you mean by ‘a fat monitor’?
T: Erm, well, it’s a weighing, like a weighing scale, and it weights you. You put
your height in, your weight, it takes your weight, and then it calculates through an
impulse of electricity through your body. It tells you your body fat content. Erm,
you’re not, it says they’re not very much use for body-builders so you just have to
take it with a pinch of salt but, you know, but it’s just to monitor that it’s not
getting too high, on a weekly basis.

I: So you kind of have it as a bench mark?

T: As a bench mark

I: To see where it’s going

T: I know that it’s not, I mean, at the moment, I’m, I’m round about the 11, 12%,
so, er, according to that machine, and then if you do another set in, you could be,
you could be up to like 20%, for an average person who doesn’t exercise, put that
calculation and around about 20%. But, even if, you could just use that, as you, as
er, you know, like oh I’m 20% at the moment so I need to be less, come down to

18%

I: So you said that you think you may be about 11 at the moment.

T: 11 to 12.

I: Is that, is that okay, or do you have, er?

T: Yes, I find it is, for me. I mean, for the real hard core body-builders, you
know, they get it down to ridiculous levels, you know, 5 or 6%. If you think of
that, you need 6% I would have thought, part, for your organs, just to make your
organs work, you would need around there so, to get down there is quite
dangerous I would have thought, so I don’t tend to want to be under 10, really.

Professional footballers are probably round about 9%, er, and if you look at
them, they are all … aren’t they? But I just er, I feel comfortable at my age,
now, about 15%, between 10 and 15. Any less than that, and it’s, you know, I’m
not a competitive body-builder, I’m not going into a show situation where you
need no fat or

I: Yes, I can imagine the guys are stripped of fat for the competition.

T: Oh yes, I’ve seen programmes of it, I’ve not actually been to a competition, but
I’ve seen programmes, and it is, you know. I mean, I don’t think, I don’t know,
it’s their lifetime, it’s their body, you can’t knock them for it, but gosh, it’s, it
must take some doing.

I: Very disciplined.
T: They must have some guidance from some professional somewhere, because
it's difficult. It's difficult to do it on your own, erm. My training partner is, erm,
I, I'd, I use all the things that I can and I have the, I try and have a perfect diet,
probably have a little bit more than the government guidelines alcohol units a
week, now and again, erm, but my training partner is a Stella, he bases his on a
Stella diet and has, (laugh), and he still looks good, so, so it's different body
types, and I guess he's a completely different body type to me. He puts muscle on
just by looking at a weight. It takes me about six months of just moving that
weight to show any improvement.

I: A body type, obviously, (talking over each other – difficult to hear question)
T: Body types, yes, yes, yes. There's three particular body types, and then there's
any combination of the three, so you know, so some it's obviously down to
genetics and what you can do, I mean, there's people who never ever get to look
like a body-builder proportions, see, if they chop their legs off, you know, and
made themselves squat, you know, they're still not going to be a body-builder
'cos they've not got the genetics for it, but it, erm. I mean I'm not really, I mean
I'm too old and athletic, sort of an athletic build, it's not the build of a
professional body-builder usually.

I: If we, I mean, I kind of, well no actually. Just, you said about you food and
how you were weighing, does that mean you're not, you're not.
T: No because I know, I know the amount now, so I erm, I would have, say one
pack of tuna fish, one tin of tuna fish, erm, and with that I'd put in, erm, erm, I use
red kidney beans, so I'd use quarter of a tin of red kidney beans, half a tin of
sweetcorn, a stick of celery, bit of vinegar, mix it up together, that's one meal. So
I know the quantities in there, it's round about 250 calories, with about 30
grammes of protein, virtually nil carbohydrates and so I know that that's a protein
and I've got 25 grammes of protein, 250 calories so I know I can have a couple of
them, that's 500. Like with the chicken, 100 grammes of, I still weigh the rice,
100 grammes of rice, 100 grammes of chicken, so I know how much, about 30
grammes of carb, 25 grammes of protein and it works out about 360-370 calories,
so I know I've done all the hard bit, you know, calculations of what's in it, I've
got me little book out and checked everything.

I: Do you get the feeling sometimes that, to hell with it, and you know, you might
have curry or?
T: Oh no, yes, yes, definitely. I'm not, I mean, everything you read, every
literature that you read on muscle and things. I mean my bible is the most
unfitness monthly, and it says, you know, give yourself a week, er, one day a
week where it's pizza and chips, or have a beer, you know.

I: And are you quite happy with that?

T: Oh yeh. Yeh. I mean, my weekends is playtime, you know. Friday night,
Saturday night. I'm a driver for a living. So through the week I've got to be
really, really, well, no alcohol, totally no alcohol. So when it comes to Friday and
Saturday I don't have to drive the following morning. I like to have a drink. I
love barbequing, you know, so in the summer well, it's virtually every weekend
with friends and relatives round and, you know, every week. So it's.

I: I've talked with some people and they do that, they enjoy the curry and the
pints, but come Monday might start looking back and think, oh.

T: Well, it's probably down to age or, er, probably if I'd been in my twenties I'd
probably might have done. I mean, now I've got to a situation where it's not the
most important thing in my life, you know. 10 per cent of my time is probably
taken up at the gym, if that, two hours a day, six days a week. I mean, it sounds a
lot to some people but to me that's what we've got to be doing. My wife works
long hours and she doesn't get home till eight. I finish work at half four so I
spend two hours down at the gym, come home. In the summer I go straight in the
garden. I spend more time in the garden than anywhere else, you know, so it's a
lifestyle, but it's not dominating me.

I: And when you're away driving, can you be away overnight?

T: I'm not. Only once a week, which is my day off. Tuesday. Day off, you see,
so. It's all three, nights, days. I've done, you know, I used to work longer hours, I
used to work more hours, erm, and probably only have five hours sleep a night
because of early morning starts. So I just made a conscious decision about a year
ago to cut the hours down at work and, er, check the times, you know, erm, and
get more time at home and go to the gym and stuff like that. See, like at the
weekends, my wife comes down to the gym with me. Saturdays and Sundays,
does her own thing. I don't, you know, do more weights on Saturday, Sue does a
class, I do a class with her on Sundays, you know.

I: So that'd be the cardio?
T: Yes, the cardio, you’ve got to start it fast to get in earlier which is, both really, and generally, I think we’ve, I think I say, erm, like I say, it’s good for Sue as well ‘cos she has a stressful time.

I: You said that you got into the, the weight, about two or three years ago?

T: Yes, I mean, yes, it er I got into triathlons after finishing football. I started in triathlons, which are still interesting now, but it’s a bit, erm, it’s a bit of a negative thing from the body side, the body-building side. It’s too much cardio. So I made a decision last year to really concentrate on the weights, let’s see where we can go and see what happens if I dedicate every training session around the body-building side, erm, so, you know, the swimming stopped, the cycling stopped and everything was pushed into the body-building side, which has been interesting.

Er, and over about the last year, from last March to January this year, you know, it’s worked, I’ve achieved something that I didn’t think was possible, you know.

I: What do you mean, ‘it’s worked’?

T: Well, by dropping off the cardio, er, I, and by dropping down to like twice, three times a week, half hour sessions and upping the weights, you know, like, er, increasing, decreasing, you know, me being able to handle heavier weights, I’ve increased by, you know, 20%, 25% possibly, erm, and it’s been noticeable, the strength, as in the muscle build built around the body fat, that’s noticeable.

Erm, but look I’ve got a wife that will say I think you’re just getting a bit bigger round your shoulders Tone, and so I wouldn’t go too far.

I: So she, in a sense, has to keep, keeps a check on that?

T: Yes, because I think you know she married me 25 years ago as a six foot lad and I don’t think she wants to be wed to a six foot body-builder. You think, big proportions, and

I: Do you think if you didn’t have somebody saying that’s getting a bit big, do you think it might be quite easy to carry on?

T: Not really. No, it’s such a difficult, such a difficult regime to, to maintain, that I don’t think, I don’t think I’d ever want to take, it’d be nice to experiment if I’d got the time, the money. I mean money is, it’s part of it. You know, supplement-wise.

I: Oh, okay.
T: Erm, because I have tried without supplements, and I've tried with
supplements, and I've got massive results with supplements. Unfortunately,
supplements cost so much, that, you know.

I: This is protein supplements?

T: Protein, carbohydrates, creatine, erm, there's amino acids, erm, you name it.
You can completely blind yourself with different types of proteins and things that
there are on the market, but, of course, you know, I've tried a few, stuck to the
few that I like, the ones that I get results with, and gone in six month sort of
blicks, got the results, not the results that they say that you're going to get, but got
results, and erm, you know, now I'm just sort of settling back down into a
different, you know, like a sort of fat burning period where I'm, sort of,
consolidating what I had, what I achieved last year, so, you know, and I don't
know whether I'm going to start again or not, you know. In the next two or three
months, whatever, have another year's worth of aches and pains, and

I: Is, is that, you mean to maintain what you've got or to try to see if you can take
it to another level?

T: To go up to the next level, yes, yes. So, I started it to, I've gone in a five kilo,
sort of weight, I got to, I started at, I started at 77 and a half kilo, er, with
something like a 15% body fat.

I: Right.

T: And I went up to 85 kilos, so that's 10 kilos with, erm, 20% body fat. Now
I've dropped it back down and at the moment I'm round about 82 ½ kilos, and
back down to 11% fat again, so I've made an increase of, erm, almost 5 kilos
which, in theory, is muscle.

I: Yes.

T: So, to achieve that 5 kilo has taken me a year. So to do it again, so in theory if
I start at 82 ½ kilos, did exactly the same again, which is archive, if I stick to what
I did last time, in theory, I should put on another 5 kilos so I should finish at 87 ½.
My goal last year was to get to 85 kilos, which I did, but I could put on quite a bit
of body fat, so I missed by about 2 ½ kilos but I'm happy with what I've
achieved. I've achieved something that I hadn't done that before, you know, erm,
so I've now got the decision of the expense again and, not the time, the time's
minimal really.
I: So what’s going to, what’re going to be the factors that help you to decide whether you want to carry on, whether you want to go to the next level or stabilise where you are?

T: Well, I suffered an injury in January. I mean, unfortunately I, erm, had been trying at a Social for about three months and er suffered a rotator cuff injury, and I’ve just had surgery on it this week actually. Erm, but as it happens, it happened at a period that I’d already put to one side for winding down the heavy training and going through this cardio period. So it’s fell into line with that, fortunately, but I have had surgery and I’ve been warned by the surgeon that I’ve got to be careful for the next 12 weeks to 15 week period anyway, which was, it falls into line, more or less, with a kilogram longer. But, er, so if recovery is full, there’s nothing stopping me pushing on again, but I don’t know whether I’ve got the … to it, erm, ‘cos I’m happy. I’m happy with what I’ve achieved, what I’ve done.

I: So what if, as a result of the injury and recovery, what if recovery wasn’t as quick as you’d like and you actually started to lose the gains that you’ve made. How would you feel about that?

T: I don’t know. Err, usually things don’t worry me that much, but, er, a lot of hard work down the drain, I would probably think, erm, but there’s nothing much I could do about it. I wouldn’t, I wouldn’t sort of, erm, putting on weight, no, no, start screaming and jumping up and down, no, I’d just, you know, I’ve already started to think should I go back to, like, to triathlons, because you haven’t got to … that. Well, you do need the shoulders but you don’t need the massive weights and things, you know.

I: So if you couldn’t train then you’d?

T: I’d do something else, yeh. I mean, cardio’s no problem. I mean I enjoy, I just enjoy fitness, I enjoy being fit, I enjoy, you know, the lifestyle.

I: So I guess I need to ask you again to think about what made you switch from triathlon to …. I know triathlon is quite hard on the body, and er

T: I had an injury at work. When I was at work I ran over my foot with a pallet truck so it stopped me training. Properly. I mean I carried on training but I couldn’t do anything I needed to, and er, I think that’s when I started to mess about with the weights more, and got really hooked on that, so obviously you need a hell of a lot of time training for triathlons, a hell of a lot, even more than I do now, which is difficult, but the time I take is, the job I do I can tie things in, you
know. You just work things differently. Er, so, yes it was an injury again that
you know, just changed. I mean injuries that have had through the years and
changed, and changed my direction every time. You know, like I had a football
injury. I finished playing football, started playing squash, got a squash injury, you
know, went into a gym. Things like that. So, the injuries have always been a
deciding factor in what I do.

I: And what was it that, when you started training. You said you started training,
got hooked on that. What was it initially that made you think, you know, I like
this, I'll see how far we can take it?

T: With the body-building. Er, I don’t know. I'd always used weights anyway,
I'd always used the weights, and it was just having the time to spend with the
weights, instead of getting, you know, digressing into something else, you know,
like, er, oh, I’ll just go and do an hour’s swim today, or I’ll go for a run. These
things I didn’t do, I just kept on with the weights and I started getting this sort of,
well, I bought a few books on it, lets say, see what happens and see what I need to
know and what I need to do, and I got interested in that. And then, of course, with
the nutrition, which was, that’s a bit of a pain, but it’s interesting whichever way
you look at it.

I: Everybody’s talked about the nutrition, and talked about it a lot, erm, that I’ve
spoken to, and they’ve all said the same, it’s really interesting, takes a lot of time,
and it’s a critical factor.

T: Well, its. The other thing that they say is just as important is your rest. But I
don’t tend to get as much rest as I should have, you know. Erm, lorry drivers
don’t tend to, you know, early morning starts. So I get about six hours, which is
okay for me. I’ve always survived on six hours. They say you need a minimum
of eight hours to let your body recuperate from its endeavours, but, erm, so I was
going on and not gaining enough, the rest. It would be interesting, if I got a new
job, and I got eight hours, what would happen then. No, you know, it’s just one of
them things that you do, innit?

I: I guess what I want to do is change the focus a little bit, if that’s okay. Think
about body image, 'cos we all have a body image, erm, and I guess first of all I’m
interested in how you see yourself and how you think others see you, and maybe
broaden that a bit, just to bring your ideas of a male body image. How do you, do
you see yourself as a big guy, or just okay?
T: I don’t see myself as a big guy, ‘cos the weighing scales prove I’m not, so.
I: I guess maybe another way of saying that is, do you think that you’re muscular?
T: Aah, not particularly, no. I’m not over the top, no, no. I’ve got definition, muscle definition.
I: I mean compared to most blokes?
T: If I compare most blokes of my age then I am muscular, yes, but I don’t know many people of my age that do what I do, so. Age is a thing. It’s something I have always maintained in myself, healthy body style, I think you would call it, body style. You know, you know, the trousers I have right now I could have worn when I was 20, you know, 25 years ago. I haven’t changed how I am really. I’m just maintaining the same thing over a period of time. I’ve not got a beer belly, you know. I probably had a bigger beer belly when I was in my 20s, but it’s just a thing that I – I’m quite proud of the fact that that’s – I see people that I went to school with, and people that I knocked about with 20 years ago and they’re old men. I don’t see myself as an old man, I see myself as a young man. I think it’s not having children. That’s another thing to keep you young. Don’t have children. That’s my tip to anybody. Remain a child yourself!
I: Right, yeh. I think I’ve probably added 10 years since I had my two year old, I’ve got 10 years older. I think you’re right.
T: That’s it exactly.
I: So I guess again, I’m thinking about how, how do you think other people maybe see you, and how would you know, I suppose?
T: Well, you just hear comments from people. Say, like in the gym, I’m the mad person pumping weights. Sort of, because I go six times a week, I’m obsessed.
I: Is that what you think people think?
T: that’s what you hear people say. Oh, here he is, Gym Rat, or Gym Cat, or ‘cos I spend all my day in the gym. Or, in their minds that’s how they see it, but I just happen to be there at the same time as them, so perhaps they’re …So, I’m comfortable, like I say, I don’t spend 10% of my hours there. When I get back, I probably spend another 10% of my time preparing food, at the moment. But even so, even, even if I wasn’t into the body-building side of it, I would still spend time preparing food, because I don’t eat greasy spoon stuff, you know, I don’t, I hate eating sandwiches from boating(?) shops and things, you just don’t know what’s in them. So, without the body-building, before I did body-building, I always
prepared my food for work, I always have done. Erm, we eat out, we still go to the pub for pie and chips and everything at the weekends, stuff like that, but you know. I like to eat, if there’s er, something on the menu that’s healthy, I’ll have that. But yes, not the way people think, I don’t go down the gym.

I: How about friends that you have outside of the gym, what do they say when they see you?

T: I don’t know.

I: Do you think that they think you look particularly muscular?

T: Er,

I: Certainly well-defined. Maybe.

T: I don’t sort of walk around without my shirt on or anything, so it’s something I’ve never done, because of my colouring, being a redhead, you don’t tend to take your shirt off in the sun ‘cos you get burned, so I don’t flaunt it.

I: Some of the guys show it off, they’ve talked about buying a tee shirt a size too small and things like that.

T: Well, one of the lads that I’ve known for a while, if I did wear a tight tee shirt would swear I was gay, so I don’t tend to do it. It does have that type of image, unfortunately.

I: Yes, I guess there is that.

T: But even so, I mean, I’m comfortable with that, if people say things like that I’m quite comfortable. I don’t know, if people tend to have a little dig about it, I just think well, you know, this is what I do, this is how I do it.

I: I’m thinking about all the compliments.

T: Yes.

I: People might be looking at you thinking, god, I wish I had the, kind of, tenacity to do that, to have the discipline, to have the

T: Well, somebody said to me down at the gym with the younger lads, you know, you want to get a hobby, and I went, this is my hobby, this is what I do, this is my hobby, and the gardening is another hobby. You know, it’s just like some will work with his slippers and his lathe, you know, turning wood in the garage. That’s what I would be doing. I can’t see myself doing anything else other than this for the rest of my life. I can’t see me having a different life. I can’t see me stopping unless injury forces me, and even then I think I’ll find something else, you know.
I: Something to keep you fit?
T: Yes, I mean I do hill walking, when I can. Both me and together, so there’s always that side of things, you know. The fitness industry is massive. There’s so much you can find to do, you know, all these things to explore, and the benefits are, you know, looking after your body, which, at the end of the day, that’s how I look at it, that’s how I see it, giving myself a healthy lifestyle. You know.
I: You talked about, you kind of laughed when you talked about the younger guys, maybe you ought to sit around, thinking and doing, and erm.
T: Well I do laugh because it’s like, sort of, a competition, the younger ones trying to upstage me now and again, and I respond in the only way I know, you know, but it’s fun.
I: I guess I would be interested to hear now what you think about, maybe, other people who train. You know a lot of people who train, and what other people’s motivations for that might be. It sounds like yours is a fitness thing, and wanting, it sounds as though you like being in control of that, and thinking about the food and stuff, but not overly, just enough to know what’s going on, but I guess when I’ve talked with other people, they’ve described other people who they’ve known in gyms who, first of all, don’t train properly, which as you’ve already said that’s absolutely vital and is something you’ve got to learn, but also just the reason for them doing it isn’t about health, it’s more about them and something about they feel that they have to do it to feel good about themselves. I don’t know whether you know anybody like that, if you have any thoughts on it?
T: I don’t know. I don’t know what other people do it for. Yes, I mean, you see people training incorrectly, but that’s down to them, you know. Poor fitness trainers in the area not pulling them up. If I see somebody, it’s like, if I know somebody, because you get the same people in the gym week in week out, you know, so there’s a bit of camaraderie there, and you know how far you can, like, sort of push yourself onto them and say, if you did it this way it might be, it might help a little bit. So you know which people to go up to and say that to, or. Same again, I always take somebody else’s advice if they can help me. I train with two partners regularly and the reason you have a training partner is to make sure that you’re doing it correctly. Not just to have a chat and, you know, which is nice, but you know it’s there to make sure that you control the weights properly, that
they're in the correct position, to work the muscles they're supposed to be
working.

I: I mean I, you, training, you kind of spot for each other, and that sort of thing.
What I noticed was there was also an element of pushing. Now they weren’t …
T: Competitive.

I: They weren’t, they were friends of mine, they weren’t body-building, they
weren’t training their bodies in the same way, but that’s how they, and other
people I know, have used it. Do you? I wonder what you think of that?
T: Erm, with the weights. No, not particularly, because the person that I train
with is of a similar strength to myself. Different sized people with a very similar
strength, and where I’m strong, he’s not, you know like around legs. But on his
chest he’s stronger than I am, so, there’s always the, erm, trying to get, striving to
get to the same sort of weight that he’s at, and he’s striving to get to the same sort
of weight that I’m on on the weaker part, which pulls you along, I suppose. But
not competitive. You can’t really compete at it. I don’t tend to. You see people
competing, trying to lift the weights, but you see you’d be found out, they’re
found out because you lose form. Form is all, really.

I: You mean body form?
T: Yes, well. The way that you control the weight form, you know, so if you were
doing say, a bicep curl, and the way to a bicep curl is to control the weight from
your elbow, I mean you bend your elbow and bring the weight up in a controlled
manner. If the weight is too heavy, you then have to use other parts of your body,
legs, lower back, upper back, swing the weight up, you’ve lost control. So at that
point you then, you might be throwing twice the weight that I am, but you’re
throwing it, whereas I’m controlling it. So, to somebody watching that knows
what they’re watching, they know. You know, so I don’t particularly, I’ll train
with the lightest weight going as long as it’s doing what I want it to do. So the big
weights don’t really bother me, and seeing big, big weights. I mean, two or three
times that the real big body-builders have come into the gym that I go to, I’ve
been mesmerised by the control of the weights, and they really, really are big
men. You know, and it’s frightening when you see them work. It’s also
something that you, I, I’m in awe of it, because I know what they’re doing, you
know, whereas somebody who doesn’t do weights wouldn’t know, they’d be
impressed by the weight, but not as impressed. You know, if I was stood at the
side of them doing the same thing with a smaller weight, and they were
controlling it all the way, or even throwing it, a person who doesn’t know about
weights wouldn’t know the difference anyway, so it doesn’t really matter, size of
the weight that you’re using, as long as you know that you’re controlling it. So, I
don’t have any thoughts. If I see somebody, if I see somebody who’s throwing
the weights about and making all them grunting and, you know, testosterone sort
of sounds that they have, then I suppose, I just think, I just wish they’d do it
properly. And if I get chance to talk to them, if I get chance to move into their
sort of circle, try and point them in the right direction. I think that’s what I enjoy
most of all.

I: How do you think they respond to that? That you’re told maybe that you’re not
doing it right, maybe lift less?

T: It depends how I say it, and who I’m saying it to. Like, you know, Mark,
Mark, Culley, he says, “Are you having a go again? You’re always picking on
me”. If I see Mark, if I see anybody that I know and I think I can help them I
would do it, ‘cos I enjoy that side of it. I mean, I’ve always sort of had this
inking in the back of my mind that I’d love to get into that sort of thing, this
industry, you know, the training side of it. Training people. I get enjoyment out
of the two lads that I train with, and watching them develop, as much as doing it
myself. I mean, I’ve been off this training for about four weeks at the moment
and I still go out to the gym. (Tape ends. Turn over) We have a one to one
training, you know, writing down of what we’ve done that week and then
comparing to the week previous, or the month previous. I miss that side of it, you
know, to see how my training partner’s developing over that period of time.

I: I’m thinking there’s a social element to that, but it’s a bit more than that,
because it’s wanting to share what you know with others, and I guess, you helping
out fellow, you know, people who

T: Yes, yes, it’s purely, it is a purely sort of gym orientated thing. Cos we don’t
mix socially at all, really. I don’t see them much.

I: What about in the gym, after you’ve trained and you’ve al finished, and, is it
just everyone off.

T: Yes, basically. We might, there’s a sauna there, so we might have 10 minutes
in the sauna, a bit of a laugh and a joke, yeh, what have you, and see you
tomorrow. Everybody’s got phone numbers so we text each other saying what
time you going to be at the gym, keep in touch, like. But mainly it’s just the gym.
That’s it. There’s no sort of life outside. I mean, probably the summer, this
summer, we’d probably have bit of a party in our free time, invite the lads up, see
you at the gym. I mean they know my wife because Sue goes down to the gym.
So we’ve never met their wives, we don’t know them, so it would be nice to ring
them up and so, that will probably a first next year. But outside the gym, no, it’s
just work. I don’t even think, following our training, I don’t even think we’d talk
to each other outside if we met on the street. We would do, of course.

I: Yes, but I know what you mean.
T: We’ve don’t have masses in common, you know, except the one thing we go
up to the gym for. And that’s quite …
I: I guess that is quite interesting really. So maybe there is a …
T: The mix of people is phenomenal, as you know Mark. The (profession given),
I’m a lorry driver, and my training partner is a gardener. There’s a head chef.
The diversity is, sort of, people go, there’s no sort of fixed sort of type of person
that goes. Everybody.
I: But it sounds like training, body-building, just does away with all that and
everybody’s seeing, you’re all seeing each other just as a fellow body-builder.
T: Yes, that’s something I do. I mean, there’s the fitness people, you know, that
do the classes and everything, but, you see, I mix with them because I do the
classes. Two or three of the lads I train with don’t do the classes, so they just mix
with the people who go into the free weight part of the gym. Quite a different
status. Actually, gym life would be quite a good … (laugh). Gym life is a
fantastic place to watch people. So, you know, you do get the body-building side
of it is solely down to body-building. Outside, they do have sort of social events,
I don’t tend to go very often. It’s the music, you see, it’s my age. They’ve only
got one record these days, haven’t they? (laugh) So, no, it is, it’s just the social
side of it, it doesn’t really come into it.
I: I guess what I was asking you earlier about what you, if you had any thoughts
on other people’s motivations, and something that’s come up in what I’ve read,
something that made me think about this in the first place, and also something
from talking to people is, there does seem to be a lot more pressure on men these
days to look good?
T: Hmm. I thought it had always been there. I mean, not pressure so much, pressure, erm. I don’t know. I had thought about this myself, because my wife is getting on, six foot tall and slim, so she’s not, she doesn’t put weight, she’s always been trim. So, I often thought, well if I’d married a fat woman would I have been fat. You know, because she’s slim, I’m slim. But I always have been slim. I don’t know. So, there’s no pressure from my wife, but I don’t put pressure on myself, I don’t feel as if though I put pressure on myself. I like to feel good anyway. I don’t know. Perhaps it’s just the way things are perceived these days, you know, the. Probably the younger person is bombarded by this, this culture.

I: What do you think, kind of, might protect somebody from that. ‘Cos you’re saying that you’re. Whilst you’re saying that yes maybe that’s out there, you don’t feel the pressure of it. Is that being in a long term relationship? Is that being a bit older, or is that more about you?

T: Wow, you’re making me think about things. Erm. I think it’s probably a bit of everything there really, because I don’t put pressure on myself really. I mean, perhaps if you asked people about me, they might tell you differently, I don’t know. I’ve said to Sue, do I look alright. I haven’t got no shirt on, or I haven’t got any clothes on, are things working? What I’m doing, is it working? And she’ll say yes, you always look good anyway. You know, so, she might tell you a different story herself, I don’t know. So, that side of it, I liked it. I don’t particularly like clothes, so it’s not a case of making clothes fit me, ‘cos I just do jeans and tee shirt basically. So it’s not that side of it. I like to look slim and fit. I mean, fitness, basically, I like to feel fit. I mean, there’s nothing worse I mean, I had an operation on my shoulder on Monday, and I didn’t want to go because I felt fit. I didn’t want to go through the operation to feel ill. On Tuesday and Wednesday I felt ill. I hated it. I hated the feeling of being ill. So the pressure is really just to be fit. And if I look good in the process of it, that’s a bonus, but I don’t, no, I don’t know.

I: I wonder if that’s something that maybe is more felt by many young men in their very early twenties, maybe, who are more primed against each other? Again, I don’t know. I’m hearing that from some people.

T: When you said, you know, about, obviously I’m in a long term relationship, mm, 25, no 24 years, so yes, its, you know, that comfort factor. You know, you
not sort of being a peacock, you know. Strutting about on a Friday and Saturday night to attract the ladies, or. So there’s not that element there. Erm. I don’t think so anyway, unless I’ve got a secret life. But, I know. I’ve got a close circle of friends and they know me as just raining, they don’t know the type of training I do, they know I just train. So. I don’t know. New people that I meet, obviously, I mean, there’s this new development (mumbled), you obviously keep fit, they want to know what gym you go to, that’s about it really. They just know that I go to the gym.

I: How does it feel when these new people notice?

T: I think it’s just the, you get onto, you talk to people and they assume how you are, and it’s at the stage when they find out how old you are then they sort of say how do you keep like that, what’s the secret? And there isn’t, there’s no secret, it’s just genetics and training hard. That’s the secret I suppose. So it’s that, when the conversation comes up, when I notice it, more than anything else, really. I don’t notice it any other way, because both Sue and myself look, you know, fit an well, and I think that not having children so people think that you’re young, or just got married-type people, and when your consciously come around to that and you say, oh we’ve been married twenty years and then, I was twelve when I got married, you know. But, no, it’s, that’s the only time, that’s when I notice it, when it’s just. Perhaps I’m thick, I don’t know.

I: I guess, I just want to, I think we’ve talked about a lot of

T: I’ve not digressed too much for you, have I?

I: I am genuinely interested in what the experience is, you know, I haven’t got a set idea of what I’m gonna hear or find, and it is really interesting. I guess that one of the areas you started talking about, and the reason I think it’s interesting, is that when I’ve talked to other people, this has been really important, and really important for different reasons for different people, you were talking about supplements. Have supplements loomed large, and everyone’s said they use supplements, they are expensive, but I didn’t know actually quite how expensive they were?

T: Very.

I: And how much for you, are supplements a part of, I guess, your diet, and the whole training regime?
T: When I went through the big push, as I call it, last year, for, you know, to go
for the extra weight, they became very important because I’d done six months
without any supplements at all, just basic, basing it on diet and learning new
things all the time about diet, you know, when I made the mistakes that I was
taking proteins, in my diet, not supplements, but protein like chicken, fish, etc.
and not putting enough carbohydrates in. So I wasn’t getting the results. So when
I put the carbohydrates in I started to get results, but it was quite slow, and I’d
read and read and read about these supplements and I kept baulking at it ‘cos I’m
not a chemicals-type person, I don’t do drugs or anything, I don’t take painkillers, it’s just something, I don’t get headaches, pains and aches and
things, and if I do I just tend to like sort of manage it myself. So it’s something,
that, putting something that I don’t particularly know about in my body, it didn’t
ring true to me at all. And I got talking to an old body-builder, 55-ish, down the
gym one day and he said, can you afford supplements and I said, yes, yes, I can
afford supplements, so said why don’t have a go, ‘cos they really do work. So,
what, creatine? He said, no, no, proteins go for proteins first. So I started to read
more and more into it and I thought, yes, he could be right, you know. I’ve tried
everything else, so let’s have a go for this. Let’s go for protein first of all, ‘cos
that seemed to be the building block, and the one thing that seemed to change
people more than anything was the protein side of it. It’s very difficult to get the
amount of protein into your body that you need. You know, the one to two
grammes per pound of body weight per day, so I needed somewhere around 200
grammes of protein a day. Difficult to get in with tins of tuna and chicken. So,
supplement was the answer, and I did, and at first I started off with, instead of
having four lots day, I started off with two lots a day. See what happened. And
nothing adverse happened so I upped it to the level it said, did it for six months
and made gains in muscle. I thought, oh, that seems to be working on that one.
So then you know, you read into more things so I tried creatine, which seemed to
be a waste of money in my ears.

I: what were you hoping with creatine?

T: Well, it said that, you know, you would increase your strength and it didn’t,
‘cos I keep a record of that, and my strength didn’t increase. It said that I
wouldn’t be as tired, my muscles would be ready for the next session quicker,
recovery rate was faster. Nothing like that happened really. And I suppose I gave
that a month and I thought well should I give it a bit longer just in case, like, so I did. I gave it two months and nothing really happened. So I had a month off then thought well, do it again. Because in the back of your mind you're thinking well this should work. It says. Protein worked. This should work. And for me it didn’t. And I know I’ve got the. I’m glad it didn’t because it was bloody expensive.

I: Do you know people for whom they feel it does work?

T: Mmm. Not in my circle of friends. No. I don’t know anybody else who’s taking it now at all.

I: Is this something that you talk about between yourselves?

T: It’s. It depends who. Because it puts a dirty sort of image, the body-building trade, you know, with the steroids and things. In our gym I don’t know anybody at all with steroids, but I know gyms where steroids are the norm, and you know, I wouldn’t go to them it’s not my thing, my scene. You know, I’d love to go to these proper body-building gyms where there’s the real hard core body-builders and find out how they really get to the stage that they’re at. Some of them have, I know, one minute they’re small, next minute they’re massive. And you think, how have they done that. You know, I’ve put all this work in over these years. There’s got to be something, and usually it’s illegal. So. But. Creatine. So, it’s not. No. So you’ve got this sort of. And plus, with the Maximuscle sort of thing a couple of years back with all the athletes that kept testing for nandralone, it turned out, that it’s the supplements that I use, Maximuscle. But, there’s a lot of people in the industry that don’t like Maximuscle, because it’s an American-based product and it’s not erm, one month they might have got their hands on something they’ve dished, they’ve put that, this is what I’ve heard from within the industry, they’ve done tiny consistency in the product. Now I’ve not noticed that, but I don’t. I only go on taste, I don’t go on results, you know. On laboratory results or anything. But, er, no it’s not mentioned. I’ve been in touch with Mark about the protein side of it, and that supplementation. I think it’s more convenience than anything else. Like I said to eat that much protein, to carry it around with you, you know.

I: Yes, that’s a massive amount to have to take.

T: Yes, I think, I mean, it’s good for you, you know, the extra protein is good for you. Your carbohydrate, I mean, well carbohydrate is really what you put your
weight on with. It's there to build your mass. But erm, I can live without that carbohydrate, 'cos I can eat rice food from China anyway. So carbohydrate side not so much, protein yes, creatine a bit of a waste of time. I'm not sure about, I keep looking at these, this supplements that say that they burn fat and things. I keep looking at them and thinking, shall I have a crack at that. But, they're expensive. 80 quid a month.

I: there is one in particular that's, do you know I can't for the life of me remember what it's called?

T: There's Muscle Tec, I think one's called. Oh, I can't, it'll come to me eventually. But, it's like a. I'm not sure whether the term is. What they do is they build you, they're supposed to raise you metabolism, so all they do is make you sweat lot, and I don't think I'd fancy that somehow. But I've tried, like, Weider, may be a product called erm, Track Metaboliser. I tried that for a couple of months, but.

I: What is it about the fat metaboliser? Why is it that you're interested in that?

T: Well, to get the. To go back to the fat monitor, body fat percentage. I wanted to see if I could get down to like 10% quick. Will it do it quick. All the hard work, you know, the dieting side of it, doing more CV work its like, you know, so. It's. There's no quick fix unfortunately. There is no quick fix and I realise that.

I: Unless, I think as you've said earlier, where if you go and you see these. And you've said that you can see them average, still quite big one day, but then a few weeks later and they're massive and you think, well, what's all that about?

T: Yes.

I: Do you, do you, oh of course you don't talk to people about these kinds of things. I mean, I wonder, to what degree is there is temptation to say, right, well, if these guys are using them then maybe it's not as everybody says it, erm.

T: For me no, there is no temptation whatsoever. It's just that, for one, it's illegal. I'm not sure what class it is, the drug. I'm sure they're Class A, but I'm not sure, I mean I wouldn't put my life on it being a Class A drug. So in that case, if you've got some on you, you could go to prison I suppose, so it's not even in there. I'm not anti-drug. If someone was taking drugs, you know, it's your life, it's your body, you do what you want with it. But I don't condone it, that side of it.

I: Do you have an opinion on the guys that use, say, steroids to get big?
T: No, it’s up to them. I mean, if they’ve done it in competition, they’re cheating.
So they’re cheating, they’re cheating themselves I suppose, and if they get the
prize money and they’re cheating everybody else. So I don’t compete, so I don’t.
Just, it’s my opinion that if you’re taking drugs, and you’re doing it illegally, then
you should be shot at dawn. It’s not fair. It’s not something that’s in my makeup.
I don’t agree with it. Whether I would say something to them, I doubt it. But,
whether I’d sop them, I doubt it, I’m not that type of person, but, you know, to do
it, I can’t see the point. Body-building’s about competing with the weight,
competing against the weight, not against other people for me. So you’re
defeating yourself straight away by sticking. I mean, and that’s the sort of, when
you go back to just the soft sort of supplement, the protein, that’s how I felt at
first, when I first started taking it, I felt this is cheating, this is not doing it
properly. So then you put up the okay four tins of tuna and that’s like that. So
that, it’s a food supplement, other than that, and Slimfast, that a food supplement,
it’s just in place of a meal. That’s a supplement, that’s how I look at it.
I: I guess there’s one other thing that you’ve just said, that if these guys were
competing and taking steroids, that’s cheating. You don’t compete. You body-
build but you don’t compete. Is there ever the temptation to? In a sense maybe to
show
T: I’m a competitor, I am competitive by nature, very competitive, you know, ask
Mark, he stands on the side, and we compete to the end, you know. So I am
competitive in that type of thing. No, no, I’m a bit embarrassed I think, about
standing on the stage in a posing pouch. (Laugh). A lot embarrassed actually.
No, it’s not something that’s in my psyche. I do it for my own pleasure, not for
other people. It’s my body. I mean I’m just. I can, I think, one of the things on
the list of to dos would be to go to a body-building show, to see these people,
because they are phenomenal, absolutely. Erm. Because it would just be
interesting to see them do it. I mean, there’s one at Harrogate every year, so I
might perhaps go to that one.
I: I think I know, I know this woman, from Sheffield, she’s a (profession given)
now, she was Miss UK Runner Up, she competed, she told me about the
Harrogate competition, she had some input into that.
T: I used to go to a gym at Stannington and, erm, you probably don’t know, you
might know Donna Hartley, who was an Olympic runner, and she changed to
body-building, and she used to go to the gym that I went to over there. Absolutely
incredible, that she'd got the, she was. Well, rumour has it that she went onto
steroids because her voice was lowered by, a couple of octaves, like. She'd got a
deeper voice than I had. She suddenly got this man's jaw, things like that. You
know. But she was absolutely, her body was absolutely phenomenal. Muscle-
wise. Incredible. And she competed and she got to a real cracking, you know,
one of the top levels. But, you see, that's the nature of the beast, 'cos she's
competitive anyway, and it's just a way of carrying after. I mean, you can be 70
and 80 and still doing this. That's why my aim is to remain like this, to remain
the same, hopefully. To keep whupping these young pups.

I: Excellent. Yes. That's great, that's really interesting.
Transcript Four
I: I guess, obviously, we've talked about, thinking about, body image, male body image, men that train a lot, er, so, tell me about your training.

S: I started when I was 12 years old. I was the skinniest kid at school, I weighed 8 stone, 6 foot 2, and grew really tall when I was young, and was basically picked on and weak, and it was the stereotypical sand kicked in face element, and I just kept working with it, from 12 to 18, I started at 8 stone put 12 stone on and got up to 20 stone by the time I was 18. If I brought you pictures, you've never seen, I've never seen a physical transformation that could be as profound, er, and I think there is an element of little boy in gorilla suit, you've heard of that one? You've not heard of that? People have different reasons for training, I mean some of them, vanity, for some it's kind of psychological weakness in terms of, you know, little boys in gorilla suit, it's the element of, er, presenting an image that's more powerful and more confident than what's actually inside that particular person. I think, I suppose, it's the latter category but probably, obviously, there is an element of vanity there, as there is with most people. I started off initially doing body-building, and er, I competed in the Under 17s Body-Building. I used to find that when I did that, I didn't place particularly well, I was much bigger than all the other under 17s, 'cos even at 16 I was, like, 15 or 16 stone, the others would be like, 10 or 11 stone, and that would weight massively that I wasn't as well defined as they were, but you know, I would make two of them, and then I'd see these kids training at the gym and I was like, double their strength so I decided to have a go at power lifting, and I broke a few national records. I broke the (area mentioned) Bench Press record when I was 19 I bench pressed 420 pounds, and then I went on to have a go at the Commonwealth record, 520 pound, I think it was, but I didn't quite make it, but I got the (area mentioned) Senior Men's record, which I think still stands, the (area mentioned) Under 20 record, which I think has just been broken but which stood for about 12 years now.

I: Wow.

S: Er, I broke Dead Lift record in (area mentioned) for my age category and didn't do squat and broke the total record, three lift squat which pressing dead lift all combined to make a total. Erm, then I had a go at strong lifts, treble German reefs and I had a go at the Strongest Man competitions, er, moderately well, but didn't fulfil what I thought was my potential in that. And then I've come to this point now where I still train just as hard, and I enjoy training just as much, but I now look at education as
being significantly more important, recognising that physicality cannot last forever.
So now I’m doing a sports-based degree, which, I’ve got a year left and them I’m
going to put in for an MA, probably Sports Injuries or even Nutrition, and start to
work as a dietician, hopefully, get through as Post graduate. It gives you a rough
overview.
I: right, so.
S: Do you want to ask specific questions?
I: I hadn’t heard that, about the little boy in the gorilla suit.
S: You’d never heard that? I remember reading that when I was about 15 years old in
Muscle and Fitness, which I used to read when I was a kid, and I think it was Rick
Wayne that coined the phrase, you know, he was a famous body-builder, Rick
Wayne. Boy in a gorilla suit, got a picture and everything.
I: So that’s something about, being, when you’re young being, what, a bit vulnerable?
S: I suppose so, yes. When I was a kid I never had many friends or anything, and I
never really mixed very well, and I suppose I did that to bolster my own ego, give me
some confidence, but I recognised over the years that’s it’s not really changed the
internal self, it’s just all about external imagery. But although I’ve gained these kind
of insights it doesn’t stop me being as mad on training, but there are plus sides to it
and negative sides. For me, the negative sides are, kind of, injuries that I’ve accrued,
and kind of, lasting changes that are necessitated to allow you to attain that level of
performance, i.e. you have to eat every three hours and you have to eat tins of
sardines, and a dozen bananas.
I: Everyone I’ve talked to has gone into the nutrition and has told me so much. I
didn’t know it was such a big part.
S: I could do, but I’m not.
I: So that’s every three hours, and having to. And what other things, you know, you
said that it kind of affects a lot of that.
S: Well, for example, just looking at it from your point of view and you’re
transcribing this, and useful information. If you’re going out and you’re going for a
meal, or going shopping, so it’s always mad that you’ve got to eat in three hours, and
my girlfriend’s not bothered. I mean, if I don’t eat I’ll wither away. Which is like a
ridiculous thing to be, ‘cos obviously you wouldn’t, it wouldn’t matter if you missed
for a few hours, but if I don’t eat. I eat 9, 12 3, 6, 9. If I don’t start, or have a meal
ready for that time I start to get panicky, start worrying about it. I spoke to somebody
else about it the other day and they said they felt the same way about it. Although I
do tend to be a bit more of an extreme person. But I mean, if you want to achieve
high level in any activity, particularly, you need high levels of muscle tissue, to
generate that muscle tissue you do need to have a very, very, very consistent diet. I
suppose it's just taking it to that extreme.
I: So, let's say that you missed a meal, for whatever reason, through no fault of your
own. Or is it possible to miss a meal? I'm just thinking, for example, you got stuck
in traffic or something?
S: I'd be annoyed. I'd be really pissed off. I could rationalise it, but it wouldn't stop
me from being pissed off.
I: Was there a time where you'd find it more difficult to rationalise and work out the
effect?
S: No, I could always rationalise it. But just knowing and understanding a problem it
different between doing that and actually being able to cope with that, if you know
what I mean, being able to, like, accept it.
I: So when you were training and building up, when you were a teenager, you know,
when you were training and building up the muscle, how did that feel?
S: Diddling. You can't get a better feeling in the world.
I: And what was it about that?
S: When I mixed with ... I was the biggest, and that, I could walk down the road, and
that, I used to think if a car came now it would just bounce off me. I felt that big and
strong. A good feeling but a bit of a dangerous feeling I would say. You get a false
perspective of what you really are.
I: Right.
S: Talking about false perspectives, have you heard of, you know like it was,
anorexia nervosa? There was a term in America, well I think it's over here now as
well. It's existed in my mind for a long term, like anorexia bigerosa, where you
basically you can see a thin person. I try not to tend to see it, to be honest. I wanted
to see what's really there. So. I think that's probably a lot of people, in a lot of
different ways. It might manifest itself in different ways, you know, with training
and that sometimes, I have a bit of a low self-esteem. I tend to use training as like a
punishment. But I achieve an objective from that as well, and it's a positive
outcome.
I: So how is it a punishment?
S: I just blast myself half to death. You have to see me train. I mean, I got to the point where it just looks like I’m going to die. I’ve trained over the years and I’ve dead lifted, I’ve got permanent dents in my legs from dead lifting. I haven’t dead lifted for about a year or so because I’ve got a hip problem. But that’s from years and years of dead lifting. You can see where it’s travelled, ‘cos I put them on my shins and drag them up. Usually when I dead lift they bleed, and then calluses rip off my hands and, but, I consider that’s a good thing, training hard, going towards my ends and objectives, and if you want to achieve anything then you have to accept there’s some pain involved in it. The more pain you can tolerate the better you can get. So, I’ve just always said to myself that I can take more pain than anybody else.

Good philosophy that, isn’t it?

I: ... that must be. And I can imagine the weights that you’re lifting, as well.

S: I do the best that I can. I mean, obviously there are people that are better, but it depends on the, kind of, genetic predisposition of that person, and the leverages and everything. But for most gyms and that, I can beat most people.

I: You talked about aims and objectives. Do you still have aims and objectives in terms of what you’re training for?

S: That’s a good question, that. The truth is that I want to be big and strong as I can physically be.

I: How big and strong do you think that is? What could you be? Are you there?

S: No. Not yet. It’s hard to define it. I suppose at the moment I’m floating in a no man’s land, ‘cos I always thought I was going to be like a top strong man, and I just couldn’t get quite strong enough and I couldn’t just get quite heavy enough. I’m quite ectomorphic, I’m naturally on the slender side, so that I’ve had a lot of difficulty putting weight. I could never gain enough. I’d go into log weight competitions and things, and go into tug-o-war and the guy across from me would be 30 stone, and I’m only like 19 stone, and he’d just go like that and just pull me straight over. So I kept encountering that, and it put it me off, and then I went into other things, and I had a go at wrestling, Blackpool Pleasure Beach, I did some wrestling there, er, other things I’ve done. I’m a good wrestler. Do you know Blackpool Pleasure Beach? They’d have a barker, and a horseshoe bar, and they’d say is anybody man enough to come and take our wrestlers on. And then I’d have a tag tap on the rib, punter would walk through crowd, I’m a man here, I’ll take him on, and then the barker would talk between me and the wrestler, and say where you
from son? From Sheffield. What do you do? I’m a bouncer. And then wrestler
would say I’m going to beat him up, and they we’d like, pretend to start fighting, and
we’d go, like, round a little side entrance, as if we were fighting, and all the crowd
would come in and follow, but they’d close the side entrance off and they’d go into
the bar. They’d all go and sit down and then we’d do it again, and keep doing it until
the bar filled up. And then we’d … it wrestled. I’d only done it, I’d not had much
practice, and when we went in, I’d got to do, like a, right hook or a left cross and
stuff like that, because I wasn’t supposed to know any wrestling skills, and I’m semi-
reasonable at it, but the guy that I was in against was dressed up as the Road Warrior,
he’d got a bald head and, er, like the road warriors in America. And I went into the
ring and I got really excited and I did, I did a right upper cut and knocked him, I
knocked him spark out. It was supposed to be a hook, and he was just lying there
like that, and I what am I going to do now, there’s about 300 people all sat around, so
you know, I started kicking him on the floor, gently kicking, but tried to make it look
right, and erm, kicked him so he rolled over and I could see him start to regain
consciousness, and then I rolled him out of the ring and waited until he came around,
jumping up and down like that, I’ve won, and I knew he was behind me, and I let him
get up behind me and get hold of me, and that. But he’d got black face paint on. I
must have hit him hard, because on my knuckle here there was black face paint for
about six weeks. I couldn’t get it out. The guy’s name was Shane, a nice guy he
was. He only did it, he wrestled six times that day doing the same thing, and then at
the end of the day got about 80 quid or something like that for it. It was horrible. I
hated it. All the other wrestlers, and that, they were bloody horrible.

I: So that was something, you were looking for ways to use your strength?

S: Yes, I’ve always looked at it, as a young kid, my dad always used to take me to
wrestling, and I’ve gone ever since, and I’ve always wanted to be like a wrestler. I
always looked upon it as a very noble thing, a very, like a sport, the best person wins
and that, and there’s no sport in it. Don’t get me wrong, I do like the showmanship
and that, but I suppose I wanted to do something that I could excel at, find another
avenue where I could use the physicality and I suppose that was the thing with that
one.

I: So what’s the goal now then? Because you said, when I said are you there, you
said I’m on my way.
S: If I could manage, I’d like to go back to strong man, but I’m getting a lot better
now, of late, I’m not training very well because I’m doing a lot on my education, but
the last kind of six, twelve weeks, I’ve made a quantum leap in training
improvement. If that was to continue in a linear pattern over about six months, I
reckon I could compete in strong man again. If that happened, which I think it’s
fairly unlikely that you could do that over a six-month period, I would have to have
another go. I would have to.

I: And when you’re doing strong man, and you said that there’s you, 19, 20 stone guy,
30 stone guy the other side, are you looking at some of these guys and comparing
yourself?

S: Yes, yes. It used to be scary because I questioned myself the other day, saying to
myself that I’d love to have another go at strong man and that, but I know when I
used to go, when I was about 18 or 19 years of age, and I used to go to them, I’d go
there and used to feel really intimidated. I’d see the size of the other guys and think,
oh no, I can’t. I ended up doing a bad performance, ‘cos I was, I allowed myself to
be intimidated. I’ll tell you a good example of this, I was strong man, it was
Southport, I think, against a guy called Steve Brooks, came second in strongest man a
few times a couple of years ago. Really massively muscular. Like that. We did the
tug-of-war and I looked at him and thought, I can’t win, can’t win, and just let it go.
And Geoff Capes came up to me, ‘cos he was running it, er, and he said what the hell
are you doing. He says, get up, get here and just have a go, you can beat him don’t
be so stupid. And I went in and I just went like hard, and I beat him, so it was one
all. And then on the third one he got, ‘cos he clearly was stronger than me, to be fair.
But it just showed you the different type of attitude, how you can, it’s a self fulfilling
prophecy, I just looked and thought I can’t beat him, so I didn’t beat him. And
basically that was a good demonstration, kind of, how things happen mentally rather
than just physically.

I: And did you ever kind of look at some of these guys and instead of thinking, wow,
they are really big, think, ah yeh, they’re big so I must be not big. Is that it?

S: Oh, yes. Yes. Feeling intimidated, that’s the sense that you feel intimidated by it.

From that perspective.

I: So instead of seeing them as super big, you see yourself as not particularly big. Is
that it?
S: Yes, I’d see them as super big and me not particularly big. So it would be, well, it’s a doubly whammy, that, isn’t it? But I know when I look at body-building magazines and that, well, I don’t get them anymore because they just depress me. I think, god, look at the size of that. How do you achieve that? How do you get to that? And it’s depressing to, so I just, I’d rather now just train for myself, train for my own betterment. But I’m one of these sort of people, I do look, outside, and think, that person’s better.

I: And does that still bother you?

S: Yes. It probably always will bother me, like. It’s childish, I know, but I can’t, you can’t change that.

I: I know what I think when I look at you. I wonder when you see yourself, what do you see?

S: I don’t exactly see it like looking, and think, skinny, and that. I have some days when I think, oh, I’m not doing bad, I’m alright. But when you gauge yourself, on your physicality and performance you’re always up, you can’t win can you, ‘cos you can’t measure yourself in that type of, I tend to. Now this is a good way. I value myself as a person on my physical performance and my physicality, and if my physicality is not good I’ve got no value as a person, and that’s how I value it. That’s a clear, to me, if I’m very strong and I’m very well, then I’m a more confident person and a person that has a greater value, in terms of everything. If I’m physically weak, I went through a period where I was really weak and not doing very well, I wasn’t very well, then I know I go down in value. Obviously I know it’s wrong to say that, ‘cos it’s like saying I want a person only to strong they’ve got no value. Clearly that’s not right.

I: Do you judge others like that?

S: I don’t judge other people like that. I would never judge anybody else like that. I judge myself like that, and nobody else, and I’m pretty harsh with that.

I: so it sounds like if that’s the criteria for how you think about yourself and judge yourself then in terms of thinking about what motivates you to train, that sounds like quite a motivator.

S: Yes, it is, it is. That would be one of the big motivatory factors, but that’s how I’d judge it. I’ve tried to get out of that thinking, because you can only ever lose, if you think like that, you’re on a hiding to nothing, aren’t you, eventually? Your physicality can’t last forever. So I’m working really hard at university, trying to
develop, kind of, mental faculties as well, but that’s developing into, because I’ve got all firsts. So now I’m doing on a mental front as well, a mental front as well as a physical front. Actually getting out of that, as well, instead of saying just pass your course ‘cos that’s all that matters.

I: What I’m trying to say, how you describe
S: I’m an obsessive personality. That’s the only thing you can say. I’m an extreme obsessive personality, and if you take two I’ll take four, if you lift 300 I will lift 600. I will break my back I will do anything I can to beat it. I’m not saying I can beat it, ‘cos as before you can’t beat them, and that’s life, but I will everything and anything in my power to beat you, including cheating or anything. I will put extra weight on your bar for you, I will do anything. Have you heard of Bill Kasmire? Bill Kasmire was, did you ever see him?

I: No.
S: Have you seen him on TV or anything?

I: Yes, that’s how I know him.
S: I remember talking to him at Jermy’s. Remember Jean-Paul Sigmundsen?
I: Yes.
S: I’ve trained with him, Sigmundsen. I was up there with Sigmundsen. My upper body was best. I used to train at Jermy’s all the time. He was like my mentor, I suppose. Awesome. But he’s got it, he’d got it. I trained, in some ways, out of self-loathing. Whereas Jermy had got a lot of self-love, which is, a different, there’s some element of that in Tim. Which is best I don’t know. I suppose a healthy point of view would be better, just to train more for health, performance and accept your physical and mental limitations and what would be more sensible would be somewhere in between. But, as I said about Kasmire, I telling you, he would spike peoples’ teas and that, before they competed. He would do anything to win. I respect, I’m not saying that’s right, clearly that’s wrong, but I quite respect that, it was quite funny.

I: That’s not just competitive, that’s ultimate competitive.
S: That’s it, yes. Christie Randall went in to Strong Man with all the psyching out, and over the top macho ness and that. He used to be bloody, well, I was just thinking about it the other day, I thought, I’d really love to go in, I think, bloody hell, it used to be horrible. I remember. This is a good one, I think. You know Greg Taylor? He won the Strongest Man, Welsh guy, really muscular. Moderate in height, about 20,
21 stone, absolutely lean. Well, we were in Scotland, doing Highland Games, only
time I ever went, actually. It was like, who went? There was, er, Vlad Dirk was
there. He was on a blind date to the Highland Games. And er, Gary Taylor was
there. I'd never seen him before. We were all in the changing rooms, all getting
changed. They were all about my size, some a bit bigger, some a bit smaller. And
getting changed. And Gary Taylor came and he started to get changed. And all of,
we all like, we were like, we couldn't believe it. We were trying not to look. He was
that muscular. His abdominals were coming out like that. He was conditioned in
every single – he won Mr Universe. He looked absolutely unbelievable. I just
daren't look at him. He'd been in the Olympics as well, Olympic lifting, so he'd not
just got static strength in a power lifting sense, he'd got very athletic power,
extplosive power from Olympic lifting as well. He'd got a Masters Degree in
Nutrition as well. He was right good. Fantastic. He went on to win the World's
Strongest Man. He could never compete …

I: I guess I'm interested also in, I'm just thinking, I've just noticed, the lad who just
walked past, kind of looked and looked again.

S: It might be because I'm teaching him in a bit.

I: I wonder if you get that though, and if you notice that. Just people. Do you notice
people looking at you?

S: I'm not as big as I used to be, but when I was really big it used to happen. Yes,
it's great, a great feeling. It's interesting, 'cos a guy who comes here, Trevor, it
would be funny if he came in now, 'cos he's the biggest muscled human being that
I've ever seen in my entire life. You'll not see anything like it, you're talking like –
that big that he can't walk. His knees are turning, his arms held away from him, but I
don't mean doing it, pretending, you know people do it like that, but their arms are
usually skinny when they do that. He's that big that you're talking his biceps are like
this. I can't believe that they're real. He must put, they use an oil called Sidco.

Have you heard of that? If they put that underneath the muscle so it presses the
muscle up. It's like a cartoon. It looks like that. They do it underneath the muscle,
the muscle probably gets cysts and that on it. But, what I've said about image, I was
talking about Trevor, er, and like, when I was the biggest I used to get pretty positive
images, 'cos, in looks and that, because I've got fairly small hips, small waist and
broad shoulders, and I've got a pretty good genetic structure which, but Trevor's just
muscle, just huge beyond belief, you can't describe it, it would just freak you out.
When I walked out people looked, but what I’m saying is, that was quite positive.

Trevor, he was sat next to me and this woman came up to reception as she looked at him and just went ‘Argh, fucking hell!’, like that. Trevor’s sat next to me, and it’s like, as if to say, she fancies me. I mean, can he not see? He completely missed it.

But he must get it to some extent because he was telling me, to be honest I have to go to the same bank, same place, because I’d rather see people who know me, because I don’t know what people’s reactions are going to be. ‘Cos it’s so extreme you don’t know how to. You know, I’m like, fucking hell. You just can’t believe it. You can imagine, you walk down the street like that and you wouldn’t want that attention. It would be too much. I wouldn’t want that, to be honest.

I: That would be too far for you, do you think, that size?

S: He’s almost debilitated, he’s so big. I wouldn’t, it’s funny to say that I wouldn’t want that size, but that is too much.

I: You look as if you hadn’t thought about that before?

S: No, no. I wouldn’t like to think that I couldn’t cover up and walk down and not get, it’s not positive attention that he’s getting. It’s pretty negative. His head, he look’s like, that big and the arms are just. It would be funny, even in clothes, he walks like this. He walks like somebody about 50 stone, grossly overweight, like that. I was talking to him before, I would kick his arse, the Strong Man, all over the shop, because he’s completely immobile. But in terms of physique, awesome. But it’s not body-building to me, it’s body-building gone mad, because they’re using so much growth hormone, testosterone, and all different kinds of drugs, that I think physique is going beyond the genetic capacity of people’s frames, to cope with that. You wonder what’s actually happening to people’s hearts, in terms of the heart’s capacity to supply oxygenated blood to muscles. I think there are consequences of maintaining such a huge muscle mass, and when you go beyond the body’s kind of structural capacity I think you’re looking at, kind of, cardiovascular and musculoskeletal problems.

I: Do you have a position on people who use, go beyond, kind of the natural enhancements, the supplements?

S: Yes. I suppose my opinion of it, when you’re as good as Trevor, yes, you can go for it. One in a million people can get like that and if you’re going to be a Mr Peabody who’s got like a massive chest and shoulders and just wants to go on the beach, why risk your liver and your cardiovascular system. But when all’s said and
done, it’s up to that individual. It’s a free world, you make your choice. I think it’s 
silly for someone to do it who’s not going to be at that standard, and there’s so few 
people like that. The gyms I go to, there are kids 16 years old and they’re dying. It’s 
just sad to see ‘cos they could make such good progress in a natural manner anyway, 
if they were given the correct advice, which is what I do with the people down here. 
So invariably what I tell people is, look, don’t do it There are a number of risks that 
you can take, but I just don’t think it’s worth for you to take it and besides, you’ve 
not even reached your true potential and, until people start doing that it’s just not 
worth it. And if they’ve not got that genetic potential to be a top body-builder or a 
power lifter or an athlete, then I think, don’t bother. But it is incredibly rife.

I: So what do you think, you know, you say you get the kids in here, teenagers and 
things, and they want to train and they come to you, do they tell you why they want 
to train? Why do you think?

S: Well, I suppose you could list it, you know a hierarchy of importance, but top of 
the range has got to be women, hasn’t it? I would say.

I: So do they think that women are impressed by the bigger?

S: Yes. But I’ve seen no evidence of that! Saying that, I met my girlfriend when I 
was bouncing. She came up and asked me out when I was a bouncer. We got it 
together. That’s the only incidence that I’ve ever known. She said she picked me 
because she liked my arms. But thankfully she likes my personality as well, and 
we’re still together after 12 years, so. There’s got to be something else, hasn’t there?

Then you look at self-image, you know, a little boy in a gorilla suit, there’s an 
element of that. Er, health. For me, it’s something like that. If I get a better offer I 
think, great. But it’s visual image and physical performance. I’m not so bothered 
about my own body image, I think, boring, one body’s pretty much like another after 
you’ve watched it for a bit. It’s a bit poncy to me. But I like weight-training, where 
you’re lifting a bar, and the bar’s like, bending. The most exciting thing for me, 
when there’s loads and loads of discs on the bar and the bars bending, and 
everybody’s watching. You can see they don’t want to watch, they’re trying not to 
look. Best experience I ever had. I broke the Yorkshire and North-East Miens’ 
Bench Press Record and I broke the Under 20 Record and I did Jermy’s, and I was, 
er, record was about 190 or something like that and I got three international referees 
there, I did 200 kilos, where you put it on your chest for a second, pause it, press it. I 
put 230 kilos on it, which was massively over the record, nobody had done it. I took
it, I remember, I held it at the top, I'd practised, it took a long time to do it, I took a
breath in and next thing, I don't know what happened, it was like a tunnel. I know
people say, it's old-fashioned, but there was like a tunnel, with a dot of light at the
end. I can't remember putting the bar down, or pressing it, I was just holding it at the
top and, er, so people told me afterwards, the referee was a complete git. I held it on
my chest and I was holding for ages and he didn’t clap. Obviously that makes it a lot
harder, because you look for the man to take response for a stretch reflex within the
muscle tissue. But I still did it, and next thing I was there. And I'd put it back on the
rack and the referee said I'd just broke the Yorkshire Mans' Under 23 British Record,
blah, blah, blah, and all the gym stopped. Everybody in the gym that was busy at the
time, all got off the benches everywhere and they all stood up and started clapping.
That’s got to be the best feeling that I’ve ever had in my life, that. I don’t think I
could ever top that. I’m nowhere near that now though, 230. I wish I could do it
again.
I: I guess, are you okay for time.
S: No, let me know when you’ve had enough. I tell you, I could write a book. Have
you ever heard of, god, what’s his name? He’s a psychologist for a university at
Sheffield, and he’s been on, it’ll come to me, he’s been on Big Brother. What’s his
name now? Do you know who I mean though?
I: I think I do.
S: He wrote a book, called ‘England After Dark’. My dad loves anything like strong
man, martial arts, and things about hard men, like, and he got this book and he’s
reading it, I was about 19 at the time, and he says, Dave have a look at this, and he’s
written an excerpt on me! But this is what’s interesting about participant
observation, kind of research and that, ‘cos when I was 19 I’ll tell you what actually
happened, and I’ll tell you what he put in the book. When I was 19, on the Queen’s
Road, I wasn’t working at the time and I went to Queen’s Road, there was a job for a
bouncer and I went for an interview there, and this guy was there, er Jeffrey Beater,
that’s him. That guy was there. He just looked like an old guy, a househusband or
whatever, to me, and I’m filling the form in and I spoke to him, I can’t
remember exactly what I said, I spoke to him I was all polite and everything, and I
had to go into the interview. I went into the interview and the door was left open a
bit. And this woman interviewed me, we were talking and she said, you know, you
know when you get the first question as soon as I walked in the door she’d have
given me the job. Which I didn’t take in the end because I wasn’t interested, ‘cos I’m
not a violent person, I’m not into anything like that, I’m a pacifist. But I went in and
she said, er you know, you’ll have to get a suit to fit you, and that, and I said well
I’ve got a 55 inch chest. I don’t know what I’ve got to be honest but I was just
making it up, just showing off, ‘cos I was only 19. So reading this book and he
paints this image of me, obviously he’s being salacious with the book, he’s trained to
sell it, and in this book he says and this young man walked in and he blotted all the
light out, blah, blah, blah and he got the form, picked the form up and he said to me,
‘Marital status? What does that mean? This form’s for the birds’. And I’ve never
spoken like that in my entire life. It’s not my, what do you call it, syntax? I don’t
speak like that. I wouldn’t say I’m the brain of Britain but I’m no idiot either. I think
I know what ‘marital status’ means. And you can see he’s just designed it to make
me look like a complete, I didn’t mind, to be honest, I thought it was funny. He’d
designed it to make me look like a typical, kind of, moronic muscleite. It was funny
to read though. He then goes on to talk about the conversation he had with the
woman in the room, and he’s actually, when he said about the 55-inch chest and
everything. And I just thought, one day, I would like to see him. I’d like to be at
university with him, once I’d got my Masters, and say, ‘you might not remember me,
but you see this excerpt’. But I’d only do it in a funny way.
I: And he said about the jobs that you’d done, and everything. Have you always
either? How long have you been doing this, kind of training?
S: I’ve worked in gyms since I was 16. I did a placement in a gym on a YTS when I
was like, 15 or 16. Did that for a year. Bodytalk and Physique in Rotherham, er.
Then after that I was unemployed, but I constantly did Instructor qualifications, then I
got a job here 15 years ago, and then I just, I’ve never even had a sick day since. I
haven’t had a day off or anything, except obviously for holidays, etc.
I: And is this something about it, allowing you to do something that you love?
S: I suppose so, yes. But if anything, I’m sick of it. I’m wanting to get out there.
I’ve come to the conclusion that it’s like, like a busman’s holiday. I don’t know how
healthy a thing that is. I’m 34 now, who wants to be 40, 50 stuck here doing. I still
train between gym and exercise but who wants to be just doing the same thing, stuck
in a pigeonhole, it’s not a career, it’s not really got a future. This is why I’m doing
my degree and I want to get further qualifications so I can get have a career path. I
wish I could have come to that when I was 20, I really do, but I was so obsessed with
body-building and weight training that I was, kind of, tunnel visioned, so narrow
visioned. I’m still as obsessed now in a way, but I can see a broader picture. I can
see a bigger world, I can see more avenues now. I discovered I was dyslexic about
three years ago, and that’s kind of opened up a lot of options for me as well. Just
coming from university I’ve been through it’s metrums and dyslexic students, ‘cos
I’ve been quite successful on my courses, access and guidance, and I’m thinking
about doing so, kind of, official mentoring work, but I’m just kind of doing a little bit
now to see how it goes. But there’s other avenues. I’d like to do something
completely different. The further away I can get from this, as long as I’m doing
something I enjoy, the better.
I: How do you think that would affect you, your training and what you think? How
at the moment you’d imagine?
S: It would make no difference to my training, because I’d just go and train and that’s
it. But obviously there’s an element of convenience here. Though when I’m
working, I’m just completely disassociated, I don’t train when I’m working. It’s
separate. I have to have it separate otherwise, people think if you work in a gym you
train all day. You go and look at people that work in gyms, they don’t. They can’t.
They’d get sick of it. I have specific, special times for me when I train, and I’m just
training and that’s it. And then I have a work time, I don’t do any exercise at all, it’s
a job. Just a job. Not, er. Otherwise it takes from the pleasure.
I: Okay. And I guess, just one last thing I’m interested in, is, what is your goal, in
terms of your physique? Do you have a goal in mind? Are you there?
S: I suppose you can ask that to people and anybody who says that they’re there,
then, to me, there’s something not right. You can never be there. You can never
achieve. You can probably apply that to other things, I would have thought. But
you’re never going to achieve your final destination, you’ve got to enjoy the journey
because, you’re never going to get there, the destination. Even if you get there it’s
not what you think it’s going to be when you get there, anyway. That’s life.
I: Do you have an idea, again, in terms of training and physique, do you have an idea
of a goal, what you’re aiming towards?
S: I’d like to get back to what I was, that’s as a goal. If I could get back to what I
was, and if I could just make a two or three per cent increase on that, ‘cos I was that
good, the way that they’re doing Strong Man now, is more athletic, and I have always
been very athletic, and if you could combine a good level of strength, which would
be more than sufficient, what I sued to have, with, erm, athleticism as well, you’d
have a fairly decent chance. If I could get back to that, get rid of a few little bits and
bats of injuries and things that I’ve accrued, which I’m working towards achieving.
But I’m not putting that as my ultimate goal. My ultimate goal is more, education,
because I know that long term, that’s what’s really going to count. I’ve paid the price
for having body building and weight training as my top goal, I’ve paid the price of
that by not working on education and not developing more, kind of, personal skills,
which I should have done. I could have done. I could have been a doctor or
anything. When I look at qualifications and the results I’ve got at university, I should
have gone and done something. It’s too late for me now, at 34, I should have. It’s
not all British. You just starting to push it for other things, based on the kind of
direction I’ve already got. But I’m gong to make the best of what I’ve got, what I’ve
done, what I am doing, and kind of pre-existing skills that I’ve got. So I’m trying to
prioritise those goals and if that comes, that’s pleasure, but it’s not everything in life.
I want to try and have some kind of health, and, I’m a body builder. I used to look up
to a fella called John Stokes, he comes from Sheffield. He looked like, what’s his
name, er, Simon le Bon out of Duran Duran. But talking about Trevor, talking about
physique, people talking about his tank top, thinking fucking hell, looking, talking
like that. Er, John, he’d go around, it would be snowing, in winter and he’d have a
thin tank top on. He’d be walking around. But he had a beautiful physique. He
looked fantastic. Tiny waist, cut, veins all up, but in a nice way. Anybody would
look at that and think wow that looks brilliant. But, he weren’t a full shilling. He
was a bit mental. He was known as a heavy hitter. But he was always alright with
me. But he was infamous for it. But people used to look at that, and they’d admire
that. And I saw him the other day. He’s 41 now, stomach like this. He must be 22
stone, triple heart bypass, he’s only 41. I would guess that you’re looking at a
combination of different drugs, a cocktail of, he took every anabolic drug, cocaine,
everything. Possibly didn’t live as healthy a lifestyle as he should have, just in
general, er, and didn’t follow a strict diet and methodology that he should have, and
as a consequence he’s come to that. And what a shame, like. But he’d not got the
mental faculties. He was the highest in the country, not in terms of mentality, but in
terms of physically, he was like a bit of a role model. But I don’t want to end up like
that. I don’t want to end up like that, big time.
I: Do you come across guys, er, I guess there’s two things, one is guys that like
yourself have invested so much in the body building and the whole area, the training,
everything, to the exclusion of everything else, and also I wonder if you’ve come
across people that didn’t start out doing that, and maybe started out on careers or
whatever, and given them up to concentrate, er, and then went on to train? I guess
I’ve read about you know, some of the research that’s happened and about
professional people, the American research, lawyers and things, that have just given
the lot up, gone and worked in gyms because it’s.

S: I was reading a book about one, I can’t remember what it was called. It was
interesting actually. He was training to be a lawyer or something like that, in
America, he was from a really posh family. It was a terrible indictment, actually, on
body-building, er, ‘cos this guy, from a very posh family, he just jacked it all in, went
to a gym, loved it, but he got involved in everything, drugs, everything, every single
element, like. But eventually he was disgusted by it all and he went back and
finished school and became a lawyer and that. But it was terrible, the things they
were doing with drugs, and he went through to tell the truth, presumably it was the
truth anyway, on everything and that, and it went to. Well, there was a right thing the
other day, an interview, on the Internet. I can’t remember it, it was something like
www bigarms. It was about this bloke with the world’s biggest arms, and his arms,
they’re like that, but his got a normal chest! And they interviewed this woman who’s
supposed to be a professional body-builder. It was so bad I couldn’t read it. They
were talking about she’d used drugs and how strong she was, and everyone thought
she was a bloke, and that apparently her clitoris had expanded and it was like a penis,
sort of like this. And she said that her boyfriend was turned on by it. No wonder
body-building is much of a sport, no wonder it gets television coverage and that, and
she said that she was typical of female body-builders.

I: It must have been steroids and everything?

S: Yes. Why have they got such husky voices? I know a bloke, talking about that
one, Tony Tom’s famous, he used to be big on tele, every time it snowed, survival
techniques and that, he used to be in the SAS or something. Talking about the last
thing. He was going out with this woman and she’d got, (laugh, laugh) and he looked
at (laugh) and said I can’t do it. Sorry, I don’t normally talk like this, but I’m only
telling you what I’ve heard.

I: I had no idea, but it makes sense, doesn’t it?
S: It's foul that, isn't it? Before, I used to mix with hardcore body-builders etcetera, er, it's the mix in that environment, I used to feel that I was out of sorts, I used to feel that I was quite significantly more cerebral than those, so I've now gone and mixed with more, kind of, university people and lecturers and everything, but I feel I'm now more of a hardcore body-builder, and I like, when I associate with very academic people I'm different, 'cos I'm more of a rough horse body-builder, and when I associate with body-builders I'm different, because I seem to kind of, synthesise and metamorphosised into something like, I don't know what I am now.
Transcript Five
I: So what I've been doing really, when I've been talking to the guys, is just asking them to tell me about their training really. What sort of regular training schedule?

H: I train four days a week, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays I don’t train, Thursdays and Fridays, weekends I don’t train. On Mondays I basically do legs, Tuesdays I do chest and triceps, a day of rest, Thursdays I do calves, shoulders and arms, Fridays I do biceps. That’s mainly my training, and I eat six times a day. Mainly I have eggs and oats and then for dinner I’ll have tuna. I eat every three hours, and mid-afternoon I’ll have a rest from training, and I’ll have my tea which will be chicken and rice and then I’ll train at 6 then after training, straight away, I’ll have a protein shake, and before bed I’ll have eggs and oats again. Basically I eat that every day. On Sundays though I’ll eat anything I want, pizza, burger, chips, just to give myself that break, but basically that’s my routine.

I: So like Monday through to Saturday, is it the same routine? Do you eat the same stuff?

H: I eat the same things at the same time. Everything is like clockwork.

I: Why is that? That’s that helping you with?

H: Well because it’s keeping my body, giving my body fuel at the right time so it’s not breaking down muscle tissue, so it’s always growing and it’s not getting catabolic, so it’s always anabolic. So like you need to eat every three hours to keep your body anabolic. If you don’t then the body starts breaking down muscle, which is the easiest thing for it to do. So like if you were in a desert, the first thing to start burning is muscle, the last thing that’s going to burn is fat. So it’s quite a lot harder substance to burn. So you’ve just got to keep your metabolism kicking along, keep it going, eating everything so you’re body’s like clockwork, expecting food at that time so you’ve got to give it at that time.

I: So how did you work that out? How did you know?

H: Just from other people’s experiences and worked it out for my lifestyle. What can I eat and what do I like eating, it’s not usually the same, is it? It’s worked for me. It’s not about the taste of it, it’s just fuel to get down there. Just fuel. At weekends I’ll enjoy myself. I’ll eat what I want.

I: Is that a relief when it gets to the weekend?

H: Not really. You just get so used to it. Sometimes you think, I shouldn’t be eating this joint, but while you’re eating it you think, oh I’m not bothered about it now.

I: So it’s almost like you’ve broken out of that routine?
H: And it’s like, but I want to go back into it again. One day a week I just give
myself a rest, so I’m not eating like six times a day, I just eat when I feel hungry or
when you feel like it. But at the end of the day you’ve got to enjoy yourself as well.
It’s not all about bland food and everything.
I: So you’re training four days a week, giving yourself some rest days. Again, how
did you work that out?
H: Just from other people’s training routines and what benefited me. So it’s just like
trial and error. Particularly, it’s taken me six years to work out a routine. I started
training twice a week, then I went up to three times a week, and the training patterns
in the week were no problem, it was the intensity. I was just feeling tired for my next
body workout. Like I was training on my chest and triceps, then I was doing another
part, and it was just too much in one session. I began splitting it up into like, four
days, that was two body parts in each session, more or less. On Thursdays though I
do abs as well. So really, like, that’s not like an intensity workout.
I: How long were you spending then at each session?
H: I do it at half six and come off at eight, so, you know what I mean. I just stick to
the basics like free weights, I don’t bother with machines. I’ll just do the two warm
up sets, the two heavy sets with each exercise. So really I just do that.
I: So that’s kind of six years of you trying to work out what’s best for you?
H: Yes, what’s best for me. Even this might not be best for me yet. I’m just going
along with it for a couple of years and see what I feel like.
I: So how’s it going at the moment?
H: At the moment it’s going alright. At the moment I’ve got like, an injury, so I’m
just taking it easy. I’ve got a shoulder injury. It’s on the verge of recovery, so I’ve
still got to take the easy run but I can’t hurt it any more.
I: So are you resting it entirely at the moment?
H: No, no I’m just going lightly, just to put blood into it and just pushing out all
toxins in that area. Push, push blood into that area. Keep all the bad blood out that
circulates that area. It heals quicker.
I: When did you do your injury?
H: Er, February-time.
I: Is that a training injury?
H: No. I was working at a club. Throwing somebody out. It was one of those nights,
do you know what I mean? But it’s not a proper job. I’m just doing it for the time
being. I'm studying at the moment. A normal job would have 9 to 5 hours, and I just
can't do that.
I: So you work just around your training? Is that outside of uni? So how does that
work then?
H: At uni I've been quite lucky because everything's fitting in. It's alright, I've been
fortunate. But if it didn't fit in the right place then I would work hard. I'd still train
but it would have to be either earlier or later, it wouldn't make much difference. I've
been able to stick to the same routine, more or less.
I: And is that helpful, being in a routine?
H: Oh yes, yes, yes. There's no point in getting up, if you haven't got a lecture in the
morning then you don't want to get up early. If I know that I've not got a lecture
then I still have get up to get my food out, right? If I wake up about 12 o'clock I'm
just too... So I've got to wake up about 9 o'clock at the latest every day. No later
than that.
I: That's something that, I think in everybody that I've talked to, have talked about
their eating, and I never realised how important it was, and to get it just right, eating
regularly.
H: You've got to work out how much ... how much, a gram of protein to every
pound of body weight. So you've got to work out your body weight, and work out
how much protein you need, which often... If you work out you're 200 pounds ...
you can't be having 100 pounds of protein per meal? So you've got to picture about
four meals, 50 grammes of protein per meal for that four meals, that's made up like
200 grammes. So that I can choose my goal for putting down muscle, or moving
muscle, but if I want less than 200 grammes I'll be using muscle, I'm not gaining
muscle, to improve myself. And as well, if you count carbs as well, your carbs are
always double the amount of protein. If you have 200 grammes of protein you want
to be having 400 grammes of carbs.
I: Right.
H: And say for example you work hard. You know what I mean. 100 grammes per
unit of carb and then you just work out how much fats you need, keep your fats to a
minimum, like olive oil and things like that, then basically that's it really. Then once
you've got your ... routine,
I: Right, so it's just natural for you?
H: Yeh, that’s what I mean. I don’t even think about it. I will prepare my food, and
I’ll always know how much I’m eating, I always cook in my room myself, so I
always know what’s gone in it. So if anything, if anybody else has cooked I’m
always dubious. If they’ve put too much sodium in it, too much of this in it, too
much of that in it. Off season I can relax more, but when it comes down to contest
time, it’s like I’m waking up at six o’clock in the morning to do my speed walking,
and I do my speed walking for an hour, then I have my first meal. Then everything’s
worked out round that. My training, everything’s more strict. Lifts, bar, everything’s
to the key. I need to know exactly what’s going in there. Because I need to be losing
about three pounds a week, so if I’m not losing three pound a week then I have to cut
down the food a bit.

I: Losing three pounds?

H: Of body fat.

I: Is that so you get the definition?

H: Yes, definition. Until I reach my body weight. And it takes me about twelve
weeks to do it.

I: That sounds as though you have to be really focused?

H: It’s not focused, it’s more like disciplined. You need to know what you’re having,
and what you can have, things like that. Luckily, actually the food is bland. You
don’t have any seasoning, nothing. Everything is just … which is alright. So, like
that for 12 weeks until you reach your, you know what I mean?

I: And is that 12 weeks, is that focused, or the goal, or competition time, say? It all
comes together?

H: Yeh, it all comes together at the right time.

I: Have you ever had it so that you’ve lost your target before you needed to?

H: Not really. I always got there all right, but if I could hit and miss thingy, you’ve
got to remember, you couldn’t have ready for it for the year before if you had 12
weeks, you’d think to yourself, well I’ve got 14 weeks this year. See how I do this
year. Right? And the thing about it is you know it takes that long, your body’s
depleted on carbs, so the period before the show you’ve got to eat, there’d be no
point in just putting in carbs like potatoes, rice and oats to fill your body up, it’s for
muscle, like, once you get your carbs in you just go up more, so you look twice as
big. So it’s like. It’s called carb depletion and carb molium.(?) So when people are
dieting and are strict and your body’s just flushing everything around your system,
each feature the lower your carbs are, so each ...are depleting, so .. the day before the
show you don’t want to look flat, dehydrated, so once you start eating the carbs your
body starts filling out more, starts looking harder.

I: I’d no idea. It is a hell of a science isn’t it, really?

H: A good site to go on about that is, it’s called bodybuilding. COM. And it tells you
about depletion, ...levels and things like that.

I: I’m interested about the way people, where they get their information from, and
where they learn things from?

H: You learn some off people and you learn some off some people’s websites. You
think, oh that’s interesting there. You’ve just got to. You can’t take everything, oh
yes, I want to do it that way. You just got to see if it works for you. It’s like a jigsaw
puzzle. One day you think, oh yes, I’ll keep that, but that didn’t work for me so I’ll
leave that out. I’ll try this now, that works for me as well. So I’ll try these two out
see how they go. You know what I mean? It’s all about trial and error in this game.

I: So what’s the season, when is the season?

H: Oh, the championships will be in October so, most people start dieting in July-
time.

I: OK. So are you aiming for that?

H: I’m not going for it this year. I’m kind of dubious about it because of my injury.

I: Oh, OK.

H: So I think to myself, I’m going for it next year, and I’ll feel twice as confident
about it.

I: so what is it, you said about the injury. What is it that makes you not quite so sure
about this year?

H: Psychologically, because I haven’t been training as hard.

I: Right.

H: Because of the injury, it’s pushed me back a level. So I’m not at that same
intensity level. You know when you have that same intensity level, I know like, the
intensity level that I was at last year, and I haven’t reached that yet. So if I haven’t
reached that level then I’m not growing, I’m only maintaining at the moment. I’m
not having as much food to eat, because my body’s rejecting it, so if you don’t need
as much food you aren’t going to grow as much because you’re not training as hard,
you’ve got to listen to your body. Because I’m not eating as much as I am usually
eating. Usually I have 15 egg whites and 2 yokes. At the moment I’m only having
10 egg whites. Because I can’t eat 15 any more. Because I’m not at that level of
training, that hard, I’m not hungry enough to have it. If I see all that food I think, oh
my god. You know what I mean? Sometimes I feel like that, because I haven’t been
training hard. I just want that strain to go away so that I can get focused again. It’s
just like at the back of my body because everybody else is going for the competition
or 100% and I’m not. It’s put me a step back.

I: So I get that then about, because you haven’t been able to train to the intensity that
you want to then you’re not going to be as big as you would like to be. And the other
guys, because they have trained are going to

H: Well, I could probably beat them still. But the thing will be I will still be thinking
to myself after the competition, if I didn’t get a good place, I would be thinking to
myself well, I should have known not to compete this year. It would be a waste of
time. But then again if I went for it and did well, it would all be worth it. But then I
think to myself, I have to gamble, I have to triple it, I’m not willing to change. If I
just rest it up for this year, then I’ll be alright. Rest it up. Know what I mean?

I: Have you been through this before, with injuries in competition?

H: Yes, yes I had a bicep injury, but it wasn’t that bad. I could still train. But with
this shoulder, you have to do bench press, you have to do shoulders with it, you do
most of the exercises with it. It stops you from doing a lot of workouts.

I: So is this the first time for you then, that you’ve not had competition as an end
goal?

H: Yes.

I: So how does that feel?

H: Bloody crap! It feels very bad, I feel disappointed. Because I got second last
year, and I feel disappointed because I should be there. It’s just like, everything
happens for a reason. So like I can’t say it shouldn’t have happened. Anything can
happen, so really you can’t do anything about it. You’ve just got to plan your goals
again. It might take a bit of work, but it’s still there. So my goal is still there, but it’s
just set back a bit.

I: Maybe next year, as opposed to this year?

H: Yes. People don’t realise, if the competition’s in October, you’ve got May, June,
July, August, September, October. You’ve got six months to train to get back up to
there. But they don’t realise, in July when I started dieting, I won’t be growing any
more muscle I’ll just be maintaining what I had. Stripping down all the time. Some
people don’t realise that. You’re just training, and just going for competitions. They
think you’re in that condition all year round.
I: That would be a hellish job to try to do, wouldn’t it? So, you know when you’re
competing, when you are ready to compete, what percent body fat do you think you
are? Do you know that?
H: Yes, my body fat percentage is right down to 4%.
I: Down to 4? Wow! And that’s at competition time. So what do you think it is
now?
H: Now I’m about 13.
I: So are you okay with that for now?
H: For now I’m okay with it, because I’m not training as hard and everything. As
long as I can see my ab outlines I don’t have a problem. But when my ab outlines
start going, then I need to cut back.
I: So that’s one of the ways you have of measuring?
H: Yes, losing my figure.
I: So when you’re competing, you cut yourself right back to 4%.
H: Or even 3.
I: And that’s, obviously that’s definition?
H: You can’t keep that condition for very long, so you’ve just got to time it right.
I: Fair enough. So will you look for something else now, like, say, the end of the
competition? Particularly you’ve had 12 weeks stripping away the fat, really
restricting yourself. How do you get back into eating normally?
H: You’ve got to remember, up to the first competition, you’re dying for all that junk
food. So after these competitions I’m eating pizza, I’m eating chips, I’m eating
anything. And after two or three days, two days of eating what you want you’re back
to normal again. It’s like a rebound effect.
I: How do you mean?
H: You put on about a stone in a week. But the thing is, your body is like a sponge,
just soaking everything in. You diet down, like I’ve dieted down from about 19 stone
to 17 in two months and then in two weeks I’ve put all that weight back on.
I: Fascinating.
H: Yes, that’s the rebound effect. Everything you’ve been working at hard, suddenly
you’re back to normal again, and your body just thinks, oh my god, what’s happened,
just drinking it all in.
I: I guess the amazing thing for me is that even that two days or two weeks or whatever after competition, you’re in control of that really. You know what’s happening?

H: Oh yes. Like I can stop it. I can just say, oh I’ve had enough junk I’ll just go back to, not the strict diet, just keep for a while.

I: Just in terms of you being in charge of your weight, being able to control it, for most people who can’t lose weight it’s just? So what is it about you, and about bodybuilders, that allows them to have that ultimate control over that?

H: I don’t know. It’s just, you know when you know what’s going in your body? Do you know how to control it. You’ve got to remember, it’s like a top exam in which you need to do your revision, you need to know what’s that for, what’s that for. It’s the same with your body. You need to work out how much protein you’re having, and how much carb you’re having and how much fat you’re having, and as long as you work out how much your body needs then you know how much you’re progressing and how much you’re coming down. So once you start working out you’re losing about 3-5 pound a week, and keeping to that. And next week you should realise you’re not bringing it back down too much. Because you need about 150 grammes of carb to make your brain function, and if you cut back too much you’re brain dead, so you’ve got to think to yourself, well I can’t bring my food back any more, I’ve got to increase my aerobics. So you think I’m doing 40 minutes aerobics, so I’ll do 50 minutes, and just tinker about with it a bit.

I: How much aerobic exercise do you do?

H: I start off with half an hour for a week, three times a week and then go to 40 minutes three times a week, then I just keep it up, how much I lose.

I: Is this on a different day to your training, or is that the same?

H: Same day, different day, you’ve got to realign it. But I just have to think to myself, well how much do I weigh, every weeks different. Every week my food intake is different. I just have to cut back. If I lose too much weight too soon I’ve got to put some food back in.

I: How did you get into it all?

H: I don’t know. It’s just like, when I first started up, when I was younger, I’m athletic anyway, at school, I used to be a good runner. I started off just walking like, Arnold, and everything like that, but I thought, bloody hell, I’d like to look like that. And I didn’t know how to, how it all worked, but you start off doing press-ups and
things like that. In a couple of years I started getting good gains from press-ups, and
then I started at the gym, after about four years. People at the gym used to say to me,
oh you’ve got a good physique, you look as though you should be competing. And
that became funny ‘cos I don’t even know what competing is. And after a couple of
years I started training properly with weights and I started responding good to
weights. I only thought about training chest and arms first.
I: Why was that?
H: Because I saw Arnold, with chest and arms. I didn’t think about triceps,
shoulders, all of your back and things like that. And then I started to look and
thought, bloody hell, I ain’t got no back, I ain’t got no legs, I ain’t got that. And it
started me thinking about doing those things. You’d see people at gyms and go,
what’s that exercise for, oh that’s for your upper chest. And I thought upper chest. I
only thought there was one chest. You know what I mean? And oh this one’s for
your inner biceps and that’s for your outer biceps. It was as though you’d got three
heads on your triceps. I just started working from that. You just learn from people. I
just ask people. If I wanted to be a boxer, I’d just ask people. If you don’t know
what you’re doing, just ask. It’s better to do something right than wrong. That’s
what the gym instructors are there for.
I: It’s interesting. ‘Cos again, that’s what everybody that I’ve talked to has said,
when I’ve said how did you work it out, when you first started training and that, and
they’ve said they’ve watched people doing things and thought oh, I’m not doing that,
I wonder what that’s for? And they’ve started to learn. And it does sound as though
it’s almost a community, really, people help each other. Is that your experience?
H: Oh. It is. You see someone doing something wrong you say to them you’re doing
that wrong. But some people won’t. The big problem with bodybuilders is, they’re
like runners, most of them. It’s like, if somebody sees someone bigger they think oh
my god, I bet he’s taking a lot of gear. It’s almost like, you ask any bodybuilder, he’s
a big lad isn’t he, yes, I bet he’s on a lot of gear. Things like that. They see it as a
threat to them. That’s what I’ve noticed in bodybuilding. I’m not like that personally
myself. But I’ve noticed people look at me, they don’t even know me and they’ve
come up to me and said, oh, how much gear are you taking? Just because I’ve got
muscles don’t mean I’m taking gear. And he, this guy, he’s skinnier than you and
he’s taking gear and I think, hold on, what are you eating? How do you train, like?
Oh, I’m training by just eating a load of drugs. They’re a bit funny with food and so
little knowledge. They’d be like … in life. At the end of the day, gear’s just one of the things that helps you grow. It’s one of the supplements that help you grow.

You’ve got to remember, if you’ve got 10 builders building a house, and you’ve only given them one brick, nine of them are doing nothing. So if you give them 10 bricks they’re all going to be working, so you’ve got, so it’s like steroids, you’ve got to give them food. The right amount of food. If you’re not giving them that, you’re just sitting there right and dropping it.

I: Is it like, some people will use them and think good now I’ve taken it, just watch it drop off.

H: And in the morning they’ve got to wake up after. In fact I used to be like that. I used to see supplements, I used to pick the one with the muscley guy on the front, and think, oh yeh I’ll take two of these tablets and wonder whether I’d wake up after. Many of these lads don’t work like that. People who, it’s just the mix you take. You don’t know much about training until you’ve got into it. So you see a muscley guy and go, oh, he puts 10 pound on to each of his powers, it’s a load of, you know what I mean. You can’t beat a bit of nutrition, you know what I mean, and training. And sleep is an important part as well.

I: So you have to get?

H: You need to get at least about eight hours sleep in. To give your body that rest to recover.

I: To repair?

H: Yes, that’s what I mean. That’s one part I need to work on in my career. It’s like I’m awake, I’m asleep, I’m awake, I’m asleep. In an afternoon I used to fall asleep and about four o’clock I’ll have been asleep for about two hours. Until I go to the gym.

I: That kind of makes you think about, with competition getting closer, how do you cope, do you start getting excited about it, or anxious about it?

H: You just get more focused, more determined, the more you’re going to kick yourself I’m going to the gym to give 110%. If I don’t, the next guy will. I want to know, if I’m going into the competition I’m going to give everything that I can. I’m never going to look back and think well I was too lazy, or I was messing about, or not feeling too good. I was going out too much with my friends. When I’m competing I don’t go out clubbing, nothing like that, and I won’t see my woman much either. I’ll keep it to a minimum.
I: I was wondering about the impact it has on your social life?
H: It does have a big impact. Apart from your training partner, the mate that you
train with, he understands so you can chill with him, other people don’t understand.
Women don’t understand it. They don’t want you to diet. So most of the time I
always try not to be seen with a woman around competing. I try to keep away from
them.
I: Is it a problem?
H: Yes, they don’t understand. It’s hard to meet a woman who understands. There’s
only a few on the bar, and they’re very harsh.
I: Again, the thing that interests me is that two other guys that I’ve spoken to, again a
similar thing, women, you know their partners, have been women bodybuilders.
H: If it’s somebody that knows about training, they’re going to be stronger. They
don’t want to eat burger and chips all day or something like that. They haven’t got a
rigid diet or anything like that. They don’t know I watch what I eat. How it affects
your body. How if makes you feel eventually. You know when you’re dieting you
don’t want any food. You want to know, oh do I look alright. You think to yourself
do I look ready for the competition, do I look small, or have I got a lot of weak
points. You are always your worst critic.
I: How does that work?
H: It’s just like, you’re never satisfied with yourself. It’s hard for you to be
personally satisfied with yourself. I can’t imagine anybody who is satisfied with
himself.
I: There’s always something to be worked on, bettered? Do you know you said,
coming up to competition and you’ll get, start doing, think about and look at yourself
a bit more critically, and you think oh I wonder if that’s a bit small. Do you really
mean small, I mean, like relative to you?
H: Oh, it’s all relative to me. I look at my body, comparing myself, do I look in
proportion. Looking at the balance, have I got more triceps than biceps? Things like
that. You’re really critical, ‘cos that’s just the way bodybuilding is.
I: How do you cope? If you see something that you think isn’t right?
H: Well then I work harder on it, to bring it up.
I: And I guess, thinking about, you said that you’re never satisfied, so once you’ve
got that bit right and you look again? Is that about getting bigger as well?
H: It's all about, it's all about, you know like a film of your body. You want to look at the way ... perfect, which is how you want your body to be. You always think it can be bigger, better.

I: For you, to be bigger and better, do you have a goal in life for that? Do you have an ideal?

H: I look up to the people who are champions, and things like that, how big they are, and I think that I'd like to get up to that if I can do.

I: How far away from that do you think you are?

H: Oh way far.

I: Are you?

H: Yes.

I: Is that a goal you think you can get?

H: Oh yes. I think I'll be able to get to it definitely. Because you know I'm one of the top British guys and hopefully once I get on course I can get that extra drive and determination to get up there. You know what I mean? I say to myself I'm not rich but I'm not poor yet. I've got a week

I: How do you mean, you get slated?


I: And is that, it sounds like you want to go in there, get your pro card, and straight away you can make your mark?

H: Yes, I could do. I don't want to be just prattling about. I don't want to be an amateur for the next five years and then be a pro for the next five years and go nowhere. Do you know what I mean?

I: When do you think you'll be ready for to get your pro card?

H: Oh I was ready last year. I should have been a pro last year. The thing is, at the end of the day I'm happy I didn't become a pro because the competition is too good. You know when I become a pro I want to know that I've won everybody by a margin. Once you're in a pro competition, you know what I mean? Everybody goes oh yeh, you was a clear winner. I guess it's just, if you don't have something in mind you don't go for it then. You don't have that determination to beat everybody else.

You're always thinking about being better, being bigger. You know when you've done the competition and you look back and you think next year, I want my physique like this a bit more.

I: So it always sounds like there's this drive, always.
H: Yes, always drive. Put it this way I will never be satisfied. You will never find a bodybuilder who is satisfied. If you do, he’s not a bodybuilder. He can’t be a bodybuilder.

I: It sounds really hard to be you, it sounds really hard for you, as well, to kind of look at yourself? I guess, maybe I’m thinking of it slightly. Say you see yourself, what do you think when you see your physique?

H: When I see my physique I think to myself, I see my weak points, and think you should be bigger. And then sometimes I see my physique and think I’m feeling good today. I’m feeling good about myself. You know like I feel crap. I’m not the type of guy who really depressed to walk around. I don’t do it for that reason. I don’t do it to attract women. I do it for myself. So it’s for myself.

I: I’m kind of interested in that side of the motivation as well.

H: For some people motivation will be women. They want to look better for women. But they’re not bodybuilders. They might have started off training to look better for women, but after a bit they’ve got addicted and they want to be better. They start thinking about oh bloody hell, I look good I think I should compete. Addiction turns to drive and determination.

I: So maybe they start off wanting to just look good for the women, and then they get into it?

H: Or they just want to do it for themselves, or they’re overweight or whatever. Too slim.

I: I guess that makes me think about the reaction of some people to? Do you think that you’re a big guy?

H: I don’t think of myself as a massive guy, no.

I: Let’s say today, walking around here?

H: Do I feel big?

I: Yes.

H: No I don’t feel big. I feel like everybody else. But I can notice people look at me sometimes. People look at me and think oh my god look at him. Things like that, I think that gives it away.

I: What do you mean, look at him? What do you think they’re thinking when they?

H: I think they think ‘look at that freak’.

I: Really? What does that feel like?

H: I don’t care.
I: It doesn't bother you then?

H: Oh no, it doesn't bother me. I do feel intimidated if they keep looking at you, keep looking away. You feel like a fish in a whatsit. Everybody staring at you. I just want to go in and say, get on with what you're doing. You know what I mean? But things like that, you expect them, don't you? Some people think, oh look at that freak, look at that guy, look at him. He thinks he's great. Some people look and think oh he's got a good physique. Just that type of thing. Where people can see in here. It's like if you didn't know me, like I didn't know what's your game. You probably think, oh he's a big lad, or, you just, oh he's a freak. What do you want to look like that for, Yeuk it's horrible.

I: Saying that, do you think that some of the reactions that you've had from people.

H: Most things I get is, you know when you come from nightclubs, the guys always love it. Other guys. They go like, oh you've got a wicked physique. What do you do and all this lot. I go, oh I don't want to talk about. Because I might train myself but I don't want to talk about training. If they want to talk about it, I train at this gym, they've got to be there. I'm willing to talk here anytime. But not being here I don't think about looking like that. They're usually drunk and I just don't want to talk about it. Women, most women feel intimidated about it. They think oh my god look how big he is. Oh if I had an argument with him he'd probably kill me. Things like that. And it's you, like, you're a minder. Once they get to know me, it's like oh my god, you're nothing like I expected you to be.

I: It's quite interesting isn't it, the perception that others have? Also maybe the perception you have of, it sounds like you've experienced lots of different reactions?

H: Oh yes, you get a lot of different reactions. It does seem. What can I say? It doesn't matter what people think. If people said to me oh you're horrible, you've got a horrible physique. I'm gonna' please myself no matter what you think, you know what I mean? My bird says to me, "oh your getting to big now, you don't want to get any bigger", I'll say, "well if I'm too big for you, you can always leave". I'm not training to make you happy, I'm training to make myself happy. "And you get your hair done and put make up on and you know what I mean, and push up your wonder bra and walk like that, you're doing it for yourself aren't you, you're not doing it for me", they say, "oh yeah, I'm his women or anything like that", it's just the same thing. Oh you're being selfish, well, time to move on.
I: I can see like, you know, the focus of wanting your pro-card and stuff, you can see it has to be for you, you’ve got a goal.....

H: Like I always say it’s my goal, my determination, but at the end of the day if somebody wants to be a part of it they can, you know what I mean, but, they’ve just got to realise it, you know what I mean, I’m not a selfish person, you know what I mean, I get on with people, but … it’s just something I want to do. It’s something I want to do, you know what I mean. In the end of the day you either understand it, if you don’t understand it then you’re never gonna’ get on. Because most women, they want to see you every day, and I’m tired after training and I don’t want to go and see them, and before I meet them I say to them what type of lifestyle I’ve got and they say, “oh it’s all right”, but after a month or so, you know what I mean, “oh, you don’t come and see me no more, you’ve got another woman”, I’m thinking I wish I had time!, you know what I mean.

I: So when you get your pro-card is that like gonna’ be your job as it were. That’s what you are going to be doing.

H: If I get a good sponsorship it will be part of my job. Like, at the moment I am sponsored by a supplement company, I’m going to Ireland at the end of this month to promote it. So at the end of the day I don’t call it a job, it’s just, I’m studying to be a wotsit, you know what I mean, computer networks, but at the end of the day that’s always my back-up plan. I wanted something there to fall back onto. If I don’t make it I won’t make it, at least I tried at the end of the day. I always think to myself, “I’d rather wake-up doing something I love, than going to a job that I hate”, you know what I mean. So I want to become best that I can out of this job so at the end of the day, if I can make a living at it I’ll make a living. If not I’ve got a plan to fall back onto.

I: Interesting what you said about you having a sponsor and that, because one thing that I have heard is how expensive the business is.

H: Oh yeah, I’ve been very fortunate with the sponsorship, because there are so many supplements you need to buy, glutamine, creatine, protein powder, carbohydrate, multivitamins, you know what I mean, because you know after training you need a protein shake, you can’t have solid food after training. It’s because you’re body needs (can’t make out) in liquid form, all the nutrition out of the muscles squeeze out like a sponge, as soon as you drink that protein shake it builds it back up
again, to repair the muscle. So if you eat food it takes an hour to digest it, it’s too late
by then.

I: from what I’ve heard having a supplement sponsor is really.....
H: Oh yeah, it helps a lot. I’ve been lucky anyway, like I’ve got two sponsors.
I: Okay
H: So, they help me out a lot really
I: Again I just heard, you know, they expect that some people will go...
H: It’s people expect to get sponsors, sponsors to them. You’ve got to talk to
people, you gotta offer them something, nothing comes for free nowadays. You’ve
gotta’ get off your arse. At the end of the day if you want to make something out of
this game you can’t be frightened, let people in body building shows come up to you.
If you’ve got something to offer you go up to them and say, well I’m so and so, “oh
yeah nice to meet you”, well, “would you like to sponsor me”, you know what I
mean, “I’m doing this, I’m doing that”, you know what I mean, “at the end of the day
I’m willing to take anything that you can offer mate”. I’m not asking for, you know
what I mean.
I: What do the guys who don’t get sponsorship, how do they cope with it?
H: Oh, it’s really hard, Body building is like, whose got the biggest wallet, you know
what I mean, but to be fair, if you’re a good body builder you’re going to get
sponsored. If you’re not you’ve just got to work your way up. If guys like me can do
it anybody can do it, you know what I mean. You’ve just got to be determined.
I: So that’s again focused again,
H: You’ve got to realise, I’m not doing it for a sponsor, I’m doing it for myself, but
if a sponsor comes up along the way I will be very grateful. But if he doesn’t, when I
become a pro. I’ll make the shots, who I want and who treated me well, who didn’t
treat me well, you know what I mean. It’s like that, you remember people being nice
to you on the way, it’s all about, consider this, if you’re good enough they know
you’re going to become a pro. And they will sponsor you. It’s just showing your
face, people knowing your face and saying, “oh my God he’s a good body builder
him”, and things like that.
I: I guess, fascinating stuff, are you alright for a few more minutes, really interesting.
Erm, something that I have asked everybody, which is talk about supplements and
you mentioned earlier some guys come up to you and go “oh what gear are you on”.
What’s your opinion of people that use gear. Do you have a position on that?
H: I think to myself, it's like, as long as they know how to use it properly and don't abuse it then fair enough use it. But people who don't know nothing about nutrition, don't know nothing about what they are putting in their body then that's just stupidity, you know what I mean. If someone gives you a packet of crisps that are opened on you are you going to eat them, you know what I mean, there could be anything in it. So at end of the day you need to read up and study about what does what, or why are people taking that or why do people take it in that way and stuff about duration, you know what I mean. And you’ve got to remember if you’re taking gear, yeah, your normal testosterone level stop, so, because, think about it, your normal testosterone level is about 100 and something aren’t they?, but when you are taking gear they are 200mgs, every other day, you know what I mean, that’s the reasons that people are going. You gotta remember, you go on for six weeks and make sure you come off and your normal levels have gone back to normal, like knowing that you’re having an erection, if you’re not having an erection without gear that means your normal testosterone level has been reduced, so sometime supplements may help. Things like that. You should be having Milk Thistle to help combat the toxins that your liver and kidneys are taking, you need to be knowing this stuff, how to prevent, prevention is better than the cure, so at end of the day, you’ve got to remember not to go on long durations of courses.

I: And do you think.......

H: A lot of people, I’ve noticed, who go on gear they love that feeling of being big, and once they come off it they get the steroid blues. They feel small

I: I haven’t heard that

H: Yeah they get the steroid blues, they feel small, they feel weak, they feel like nothing is happening to them, so they are afraid of that feeling, steroids give them that confidence, it gives them that confidence, they feel big, they feel fuller, their body feels bigger. They might not look bigger but they feel bigger mentally, they feel better. I would say, if you’ve got a problem with alcohol and you get violent, don’t bother taking steroids, if your nice and laid back with alcohol then you’ll be perfect with them.

I: Can that be, so steroids can equally make you......

H: Yeah, if you’re a tosser to begin with you’re a bigger tosser when you take them. That’s what the thing is. Steroids won’t make you a tosser, you’re a tosser to begin
with. That makes you even bigger. So if you’ve got a mate who is an idiot or, just
tell him to stay away from them, because they just, he’ll think he’s ten men after that.

I: Right, I hadn’t heard that, that steroid blues and guys, what do they do then, you
know, have you met guys like that?

H: Yeah, yeah I’ve met them...

I: And what do they do? How do they cope with suddenly coming off them and
feeling smaller and..........

H: Well, some people don’t like coming off, they’ll come off for a week and feel shit
and go back on them. And the thing is they don’t realise they are messing their
system up. But the clever people, they’ll do short courses and come off for a short
time and go back on. So if they are on for three weeks they will come off for three
weeks, and go back on, so giving that body that rest. The natural body just start
producing normal testosterone and normal everything, bring the levels back to
normal. Steroids bring your blood-pressure up as well, and like so, at the end of the
day you need to be, you need to know that, so you don’t want to be on it too long,
you know what I mean.

I: So it sounds like though that some guys who have, maybe have, a problem anyway
without, even though they might be big guys, it gets even more of a problem once
they get into all this

H: yeah, yeah

I: That must be really hard for them...

H: it’s nothing that has really happened to them, it’s just that because they are not
taking it (can’t make out) they just need to break out of that barrier. If you know
what you are doing you’ll do well, but if you don’t know what you are doing then, we
see people, you know what I mean, acne and everything, you know what I mean.

Because they are taking too much steroids your body not happy because, you know
what I mean, you’re taking too much. And things like that. They need to be drinking
plenty of water to flush out their system of toxins and things like that. It’s not as easy
as it sounds.

I: The whole thing sounds, to do it properly you’ve really got to be on the ball..

H: You need to be talking to someone who knows what they are doing, you know
what I mean. You can’t go to a doctor and he can’t tell you nothing, you know what
I mean. My friend went to a doctor and he went, “Oh I want blood tests to see if
everything is normal”, “oh no we can’t provide it on NHS, you have to pay for it”.

123
He's taking gear, he knows he's doing wrong, he wants to know if everything is alright and the system is "no we can't offer you that". You know what I mean, that's a bit bad isn't it?

I: Yeah, bloody hell. Hmmm, just the whole thing, like nutrition, getting that right, training, just everything sounds as though it's, you've got to have it so worked out.

H: You know, it's like, wotsit, err, it's like at the end of the day if you go to a gym you start meeting people, things like that. You start, it becomes second nature to you. There are certain types of steroids for certain things (can't make out), like some people have got weak points, they inject their weak points certain type of steroid to look bigger. Or you know when you do that,

I: So the people in the game they know if it's naturally trained or inflated or, that's fascinating.

H: it does get, yeah. It's one of the things you should know, it's a science in itself you know what I mean?

I: and again, everyone I have talked to, I had no idea when I first started doing all this I had absolutely no idea and it is so interesting, talking to people, finding out and again, just talking to the guys that are actually doing the body building, the guys that are doing the training, 'cos erm, yeah, the stuff that's written doesn't have their perspective, doesn't have their

H: It does them no justice,

I: No, not at all

H: Sometimes you'll see, "Oh, this (can't make out) just hanged himself, he'd just started taking a course of steroids", and they didn't say his wife had left him and his child died, you know what I mean. At the end of the day, like I say, if you're a tosser to begin with then take steroids you're going to be a bigger tosser, it just adds to that. At the end of the day if there's some guys who are on steroids are body builders, nice guys, but these young people walking about, "I wanna be a body builder", give everybody a bad example. These people just back chat about each other and things like that, you know what I mean. Some people have got nothing good to say to no-one so they just put other people down.

I: That's really interesting. Is there anything you think that I should, would be interesting for me to know that we haven't talked about?

H: No, anything you wanna' know

I: that's really interesting, that's great, really appreciate that.