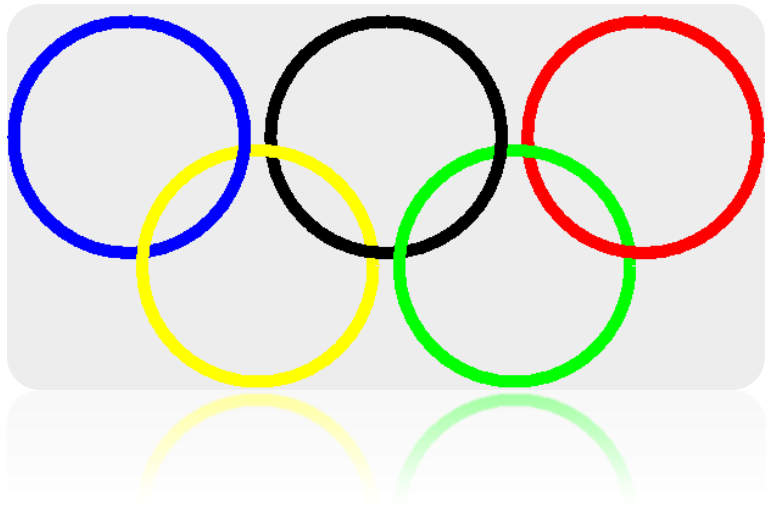


World Class Change

She blazed across the finish line. “That’s what I’m talkin’ about!” Shari heard her coach shout across the track. “That’s your best time yet!” She was working harder than she had ever worked in her athletic career, but it seemed that she had missed something before the last Olympics. Her preparation had been perfect, training and nutrition-wise, but she had lacked sufficient strength during the first heat. Dan, her coach, was crestfallen. After all, he had been spending as much time at the track as she had. The Olympics are the world’s premier athletic event. Those who won gold medals were “set for life.” Endorsements, coaching positions, even television and movie roles, were all part of the spoils of winning your Olympic event.

Shari needed to win the 100 meters this time. She may not have another chance; this might be her “swan song.” Having first competed at the age of eighteen, she had gained tremendous experience running alongside the world’s most elite sprinters. And although she finished eighth in a field of ten, she prided herself on having been the fastest American woman that year. That’s when she first realized that Olympic fame was a ticket to success.



For months following the race, Shari was on the talk show circuit chronicling her journey. Afterward she toured NCAA schools, giving interviews and clinics on running and racing. The money was not fantastic, but for an eighteen year old it took care of her bills and even some fun stuff like trips to Jamaican beaches.

Four years later, Shari had trained harder and focused more intently on winning the gold. She made it through the first two heats and found herself in the finals for the first time in her career. The pressure was tremendous. Just making it to the finals would have been enough for some, but Shari wanted to win. During the first two heats she got a real insider's look at these world class athletes. In the tent that housed the finalists before the race, Shari saw and heard some things that unnerved her.

These sprinters were like million dollar race horses. Their bodies rippled with muscle, the skin so taut that the veins bulged in bold relief, like a 3-D Rand McNally road map. Not only that, but most of them had a masculine look about them. She saw elongated jaw lines and large foreheads; she even detected a five o'clock shadow on one of the "ladies." Hearing them speak, she couldn't help but notice how deep some of their voices were. Shari had her back to several of them while she listened to their conversations. Had she not known where she was, she may have thought that she had wandered into the men's room by mistake.

The conversations themselves had a common theme—steroids. It seemed that each of them had used them in preparation for this day. Shari heard names of drugs like, Testosterone, Nandralone, Dianabol, Winstrol, and several others that she didn't recognize. She thought to herself, "How can this be happening? I thought that these

games were drug tested.” She soon discovered that not only was steroid usage prolific here, but drugs that mask each steroid so that they couldn’t be detected were just as popular. Her confidence was beginning to wane. She was convinced that Dan had given her the best race preparation ever, but these other women had an advantage that she didn’t. How was she ever going to beat women that in many ways looked and ran like men?

She did the best she could to focus on the race which was only minutes away, but as she took each competitor’s inventory, she scrutinized each musculature as she had never done before; she was convinced that this Olympics would not be her time once again. Lining up at the starting blocks next to a German woman whose thigh was twice that of Shari’s was the final straw. “What am I doing here? If I’m going to compete against these Amazons I need to make a drastic change....”



At the gun Shari had her best start ever out of the blocks, but 50 meters into the race the muscle-bound herd powered past her, causing her to finish in a disappointing seventh place. After the race she had one thing to say to her coach: “Dan, I need to get juiced.”

His shoulders drooping in a sign of resignation, he agreed. “We’ll start as soon as we get back to the States. I know a med student in a research lab that has been working on something that he says will revolutionize athletic performance.”

“Come on in,” Shari called to Dan as he knocked on the front door of her apartment. Dan placed a blue vinyl case on the table. “Open it,” he said.

“I don’t see you in three weeks and you show up with a mystery gift?”

“There’s no time to waste. My friend the med student provided us with a batch of what he calls ‘Super Test’.” Shari took out the loaded syringe. “Dan, are you sure? Is this going to cause me any harm?”

“Shari, I trust this guy. He says he has been working on this for three years using lab rats, and the results have been fantastic.” Not wanting to fail in her third and final Olympic competition, Shari took a deep breath and plunged the needle into her thigh. “Heaven help me,” she thought.

As her usage increased, her times decreased. She raced in Europe several times during the ensuing three years, winning most of her races and ranking consistently in the top three in the world. Although her friends and family questioned her about her size and other physical changes, Shari ignored them, focusing only on the Olympic medal that she was determined to win.

Her heartbeat seemed to constantly speed up to the point of her fearing that it was going to pop right out of her chest. Speaking of that, her breasts seemed to have disappeared; she was almost as flat-chested as a 10-year-old boy. That was another thing...down below there were some changes occurring that defied explanation. Her whole gender seemed to be changing; it looked...different to her—even felt different—like a new Shari was emerging. She didn't let on to Dan or anyone else, convincing herself that after the Olympics she would discontinue the injections and things would return to normal.

As she put on her makeup that night, preparing to meet Dan for dinner at the local buffet, the cotton ball began to shred on her chin. “What the...?” Upon closer inspection she discovered why—she had the beginnings of a beard! “No, this is not happening; it can't be happening!” She had avoided any close examination in the mirror until now, but she realized that she could no longer ignore what had been taking place. Standing naked in front of the closet door mirror she scrutinized her body.

Flexing like a bodybuilder in a competition, Shari saw an image that seemed incongruous with what she remembered to be the beautiful, feminine, little girl that had been the prom queen at her high school. Appearing in front of her was someone that could have been her brother. Her chest, arms, and legs were three times the size they were at the last Olympics. Her facial features now were ruggedly handsome, rather than beautiful. Her body lacked any feminine curves; instead it was a solid block, more suited for the NFL than for bearing children. And that reminded her, “I haven't had a period in over three years.” Glancing down below her waist, Shari saw something indescribable.

She saw what could have passed for either male or female, depending on one's perspective.

“What have I done to myself,” she cried. Dialing Dan's number on her cell, she found the line busy and hung up. She collapsed on the bed, ruing the day that she ever embarked on such a selfish endeavor. As she sobbed in self-pity the phone rang. “Shari, it's Dan, I have bad news. My friend the med student discovered that his lab rats have developed a problem—they're changing gender while doubling their size. He hasn't been able to reverse the process, so he said we need to stop the injections immediately! Shari, Shari, did you hear me...?” The phone fell to the ground as a massive heart attack took its toll on Shari's morphed body.

A complete shutdown was how the autopsy read—all systems were overloaded as an inexplicable gender change had begun to take place. A massive amount of an unexplained, never before seen synthetic hormone was found in the patient's body. A note at the very bottom of the autopsy report read, “Deceased appears to have more male characteristics than female, although the family supplied information stating that the deceased was a female named Shari.”

