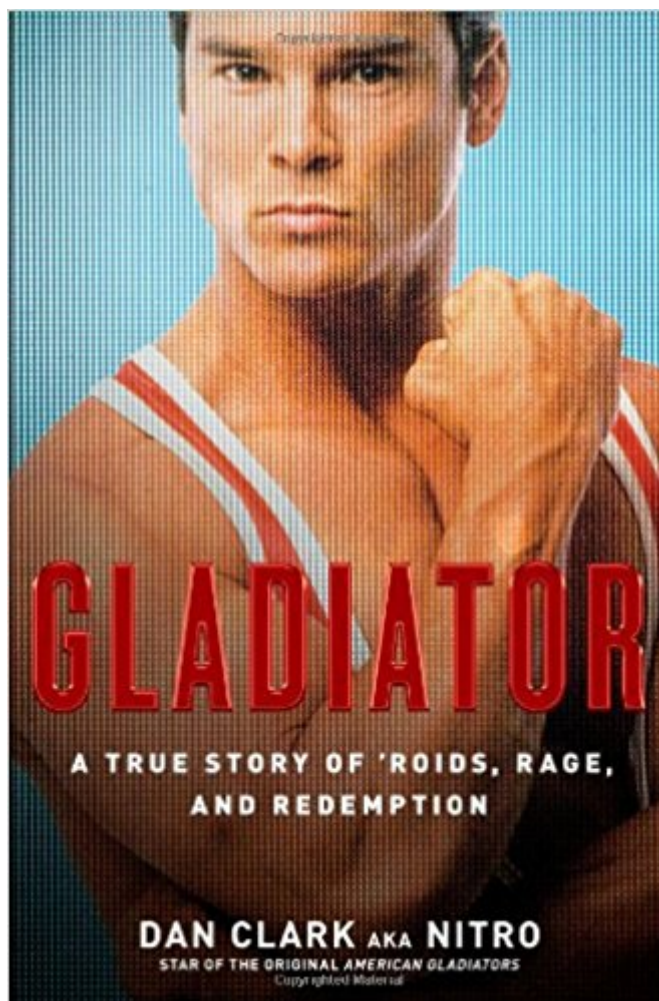


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Gladiator: A True Story Of 'Roids, Rage, And Redemption



Synopsis

The wildly entertaining and unflinching cautionary tale of the American Gladiator star's twenty-year affair with steroids. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

Dan Clark began his career as an athlete, playing football for the Los Angeles Rams and in Europe. He later starred as Nitro on the extraordinarily popular reality television show American Gladiators. Clark then turned to acting and screenwriting. He wrote, directed, and starred in the independent film Looking for Bruce. He recently hosted ESPN Classic's American Gladiators marathon, and he continues to consult on the revamped American Gladiators franchise. He lives in Los Angeles, where he is working on his next book.

INTRODUCTION
Being "Nitro"
Come at me the wrong way tonight and you may not walk out of here alive. Nitro. I can't see the audience yet, but I can hear the expectant buzz of excitement as they call out my name. The buildup is infectious. My heart pounds as I pass through the entrance, turn a corner, and catch my first glimpse of thousands and thousands of fans dressed in red, white, and blue. They seem to stretch out forever. Nitro. Totally pumped, I burst onto the arena floor of Madison Square Garden as fifteen thousand cheering fans slam to their feet. It is a fantastic world like no other -- breathtaking, infinite. I lose myself in the reverberations smashing into each other, a wonderful chaos, as one noise rises above the uncontrolled fervor of screams and whoops. A

chant.NITRO!All eyes are on me. I luxuriate as the people in the stands lose sight of who they are. Dignity and restraint are tossed aside because standing before them is a hero upon whom they can project their thrills, dreams, and insatiable demands.NITRO! NITRO! NITRO!! stand in the midst of the pulsating frenzy, lapping up and sucking in each and every drop.I look up and catch my breath. There I am, larger-than-life, plastered on the giant JumboTron screen that dangles above the arena like a suspended star.God, let me die right here.I begin to run the outer perimeter of the arena in a prebattle ritual. The lyrics to a song by The Who blast from a two-hundred-watt amp and dance in my head.No one knows what it's likeTo be the bad man...To be hatedTo be fatedTo telling only liesI spot my opponent for the upcoming event. The hair on the back of my neck and my arms stands up, my heart thumps, and my ears ring loudly with each step toward my opponent -- until I am standing across from him.Like all the ones before him, he is scared. He closes his eyes and sucks in a stiff breath of courage. I can see his eyelids flutter and I sense the terror that churns inside him. He might have been captain of the football team. Hell, he might even have been the best athlete in his state. But now he is standing in front of fifteen thousand people, trying to beat me.He thought he had what it took to get here. He'd put his money where his mouth was, and now he is going to pay the price. The chant explodes again.NITRO! NITRO! NITRO!My body vibrates, my heart rattles against my ribs, and every muscle in my body tightens. I am about to explode into my opponent as hard as I can, to hurt him, to punish him, with my rage and my 235 pounds of solid muscle. At this moment I feel revulsion toward my opponent, absolute hatred. All I want to do is wipe the stupid look off his face."Contender, are you ready?" Mike Adamle's voice booms out of the speakers. "Gladiator, are you ready?"My heart pounds. Louder. Harder. Faster. Get ready, here I come!The whistle blows. I blast into my opponent with reckless abandon, instantly overwhelming and dominating him. My shoulder slams into his ribs, sending the "football captain" flying in the air before landing in a painful, broken heap at my feet. The world slips away, and for a moment the voices are quiet. The universe is mine. Nirvana. The world makes sense. For one moment in time, everything is in sweet, simple order.This is my refuge, the reason that I compete. It is all about the rush -- the hits, the legal acts of physical violence that make the crowd roar and make me grin from ear to ear. The rush lasts for only an infinitesimal period of time, but while it is happening, I revel in a make-believe world where normal rules do not apply. I know that when it is over and the cruel reality of life sets in, the joke will be on me, but I don't care. Everybody craves the incomparable power of being a Gladiator -- the potent experience of rising to the heavens, however briefly, igniting and blowing up any dark, hidden places within.When the referee gives me the victory sign, I fling my arms wide open, tilt back my head, and scream, somehow trying to expose the truth about my

beautiful but fucked-up world. The fans are oblivious. I exit the arena while they cheer, and I head into the locker room, where I sit, my head slumped, my body still shooting adrenaline. But even then, when my dreams have become a reality, behind the cheers is a dark secret, a hidden agenda of a life being torn apart and wasted. I lock myself in an empty stall, and there I am, all alone, the crowd still shrieking from my victory as I sit on the toilet in the shadows and cry for a long time. Who am I kidding? I know that each time I slam a syringe into my ass or swallow a steroid, it is nobody's fault but my own. I also believe each and every time that I can never stop. You're asking me why? Look at the world that has opened up to me. I have this picture of myself in the back of my head as a chubby kid. And now, girls are hanging on to me, agents wine and dine me, and Warner Bros. wants to make a movie with me. I pull up to Roxbury, the hottest club in Hollywood. A line of people spills out onto Sunset Boulevard, all waiting to get in. The doorman knows who I am and I slip inside and nod to Sylvester Stallone as I head up the stairs to the VIP room. Everyone is here: Denzel, Van Damme, Snipes, and some rookie seven-foot-two-inch basketball player they call Shaq. The atmosphere is anything-goes. The girls, the armpieces, the hopefuls, the I'll-do-anything-to-get-close-to-celebrity types, pack the room. They're all ripe for the picking. Hell, it is harder to go home alone than it is to take someone with me. One afternoon, I'm having lunch at Mezza Luna in Beverly Hills when Steve Martin arrives at my table, introduces himself, and tells me he's a huge fan. As I stand up, shake his hand, and tell him I'm his biggest fan, he brings me over to Dustin Hoffman's table and introduces me to the actor and his wife. A few nights later, I'm at the home of the late billionaire Marvin Davis. Tony Bennett is the entertainment, and Cristal Champagne is on ice as I'm introduced to former presidents Ford and Carter. As I'm leaving, Merv Griffin calls out, "Dan, there's someone I want you to meet." It's Ronald Reagan. -- -- -- I was living the all-expenses-paid life everyone dreams about. I could walk into any place in Hollywood like I was a fucking movie star. I went from looking at the world to watching the world look at me. The thing is, I love my country. I'm proud to have been the star of a show with the word American in the title. American Gladiators. A hit show that aired in more than forty countries with over 12 million weekly viewers. Madison Square Garden was the first stop in our 150-city live tour and I loved it, but somewhere inside, I knew it was all a lie, that I was deceiving people. But I told myself it was okay because they didn't really want the truth. They wanted to be entertained. That I was addicted to steroids, drugs that not only altered my consciousness but also altered my appearance, was the secret hook that drew the crowds, and everybody ate it up. If only someone had told me the truth back then when I was Nitro and thought I was indestructible. Of course, the question is, would I have listened? Would I have done things differently if I'd known then what I know today? It's hard to say,

but these days you should see me wake up in the morning...or maybe you shouldn't. As a result of twenty years of steroid use, I walk with a limp, I have seven scars on my face, two destroyed knees, and I can't walk up a flight of stairs until I chug a couple of cups of black coffee and a handful of anti-inflammatory pills. What strapping eighteen-year-old athlete could ever imagine ending up with a herniated back disk and a neck that pops like fireworks on the Fourth of July from a mere turn of my head? And those are the obvious problems. The real prizes are a pair of shrunken testicles and surgical scars across my nipples from having breast tissue removed from my chest. It wasn't always like this...Copyright © 2009 by Dan Clark

CHAPTER 1 In Search of an Identity

What are the worst three words a child can hear? We're getting divorced. I am four years old in 1968, and my father has just returned to California from a two-year work stint in Vietnam. He walks into the living room of our box-size home in the severely depressed belly of Orange County, California, and announces, "Your mother and I are getting a divorce. You and your brother are going to Minnesota with me. Your sister is staying here with your mom." My father, Wally, is massive, forceful, and relentless. We are all insignificant and powerless in his wake. So this is it. No explaining. No comforting. No choices. My brother, Randy, two years older than me, is my idol. My hero. My rock. My chubby-cheeked, ebullient little sister, Christine, is two years my junior. My mother, Kazuko, whom my father met while he was in the marines in Japan, can do little to protest. She's been in the United States for only a short time, barely speaks English, and doesn't understand the customs and laws of this country. She doesn't know it's customary for the mother to get custody of the kids, and she doesn't know my father's threats of deportation are empty slings of intimidation. A few days later, I'm standing in the airplane aisle watching the flight attendant closing the plane doors. I'm squeezing my eyes shut as hard as I can, with nothing but the blindness of hope that I can still keep this divorce nightmare from happening. That is when I still dreamed. That is when I thought I could make a difference. That is when I still believed. A flight attendant approaches me, shattering the illusion: "Young man, you're going to have to sit down." I open my eyes to discover I'm still on the plane with my father and my brother already seated to my side. I see my mother, her eyes full of sorrow, on the tarmac ho...

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I got his book yesterday (Saturday) and I finished it this afternoon! The book will completely wrap you up in the stories and the DETAILED descriptions of everything he went through. He doesn't pull any punches, even when it comes to some embarrassing details and crazy self-deprecating humor. Even if you aren't a fan of his, or ever even watched American Gladiators, you WILL enjoy this book. There isn't a dull moment. I haven't read a book in ages, but this one made me keep

going. I swore I stayed up past 3AM last night (or this morning, whichever way you look at it) reading it and I only stopped because my vision was blurring, I'm not kidding. I didn't want to stop. This book made me feel kinda guilty, because I was an avid American Gladiators fan, I still am actually, I won't even miss a rerun I've seen hundreds of times! But all the things he did to his body to please the crowd, and to satisfy his addiction because he felt like he NEEDED to use drugs, is detailed and heart-wrenching. I read that somebody cried like four times reading it. I almost came to that, but there were people in the room, and I try not to cry in front of anyone. His life is defined by the tragedies that he faced as a child and he explains it to the reader like he is TELLING it to you in person. You can actually picture the words playing out like it's a movie; a very sad, graphic movie that you can't look away from, even at the most detailed content that you cannot believe actually happened in his life. Before reading his book, I knew steroids were bad, I knew about the "glorified side-effects", but I never knew the more inner personal side-effects. Steroids are NO JOKE, using steroids is NO JOKE. It's not a joke, they will [.....]! Dan Clark exposed his most inner secrets in incredible detail to PROVE that steroids are NOT GOOD, they are REALLY NO JOKE, he tells his story to help people understand the more unknown side-effects of steroid use, that people might try to look away from, turn a blind eye to. He DOESN'T depict himself as a victim, he knows he did it to himself. The Epilogue is extremely powerful, extremely powerful. He actually offers up his own advice to parents of athletes. This book is a great read. It's real, it's detailed all the way through about his using, trying to overcome it, becoming a father, being an American Gladiator, growing up, everything is here, and I recommend it to anybody. If you are thinking about buying this book, don't THINK about it, BUY IT, BUY IT NOW! Definite 5 ***** STAR book, definately. Review by - The Robin.

I was a huge fan of the show way back in the day and was eagerly anticipating reading this book. The story is compelling, riveting, and often frightening in the way Clark lays bare all his dirty secrets, his fears, and his dreams. While I wasn't sure I'd be interested in a book about steroids, I found a correlation in the societal/media pressures that Dan faced to be "big and strong" and the influence I (and probably many women) feel every day to be "pretty and thin" and how damaging this can be to one's self-esteem and self-image. So while this is a book about steroids and the giant part they played in sports and athletics (and specifically in Clark's life), it is also an inspirational story about a man's battle with himself and how he finally finds balance. You will find this book an easy read: funny, seedy, sexy, endearing, and adventurous. Dan Clark speaks often of his need to be seen and to shine. And shine he does. . . right here in the pages of this book.

First of all, I believe that it took a great deal of courage for Dan Clark to write this book ... his willingness to reveal so many personal and embarrassing moments in his life; totally breaking down the ego/persona that consumed most of his adulthood. Not too many people of his caliber are willing to do such and I think this is the reason his book is both believable and an excellent read. You get the idea of where things are going early on in the book ... a childhood tragedy manifests itself into an out-of-control beast later in life. Although this type of story may seem a bit cliché, it is where Clark's ability to remember details and convey deep rooted emotions that make his story unique and very interesting. There is a lot of relevant background that precludes Clark's days as a Gladiator ... he's a talented, but injury-plagued football player who desperately wants to compete at the highest level (from big-time college to the NFL) and is willing to go any route to get there ... which is where the steroids enter the picture. The Faustian bargain Clark makes by using steroids to advance his career from football to American Gladiators takes control of his life ... he lives on the brink ... delving himself into a world of excess, whether it be bedding as many women as possible to fighting a group of gang-banger types by himself. He believes the answer to any problem he faces is in a syringe or a pill ... deep down, all along he knows he's damaging himself in the process (like the embarrassment of dealing with gynecomastia), but the immediate results are so superficially gratifying (the fame of being an American Gladiator) he rolls on ... until he reaches the breaking point in which he comes to terms with the tragedy he faced in childhood. Clark concludes his journey with a sobering statement of steroid abuse/addiction and colors his statement with a list of recognizable names of those who have totally succumbed to the evils of steroid abuse. "Gladiator" is interesting, inspirational and revealing ... much on par with Samuel Fussell's book "Muscle". Clark has found his niche ... he can write well. The book is humorous, thought-provoking and should be recommended reading for teenage boys with dreams of sports superstardom ... for every year there are probably tens of thousands of Dan Clarks playing sports in high schools around the US, willing to do anything to their body to get to the next level ... and 99% of them will fail in their quest. Dan Clark, however, proves that there is a price to pay for the 1% who do achieve that desired success.

Great read on a good man.

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