

THE PROVING GROUNDS: ARACHIDONIC ACID

By William Llewellyn

When the U.S. Military was considering replacing the venerable M-14 rifle with the newer and lighter AR-15 back in the 1960's, the manufacturer was first required to send sample units to the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Aberdeen, Maryland for evaluation. The technicians there were responsible for subjecting each potential new weapon to rigorous endurance and adverse conditions testing, so that any design flaws would become apparent before it was placed in the field. If a gun was going to jam with a little sand, dirt, or mud, or fail with heavy use, they needed to know about it first. Over the decades, Aberdeen has literally become a graveyard of small arms designs. Many weapons that looked exceptional on paper went there only to flunk out. The AR-15 would pass, and was ultimately adopted as the M-16 rifle. It was a long and arduous road for the weapon to get there, however. When you think about how important the reliability of a weapon is though, I suspect not a single soldier would have had it any other way.

So what does this all have to do with sports supplements? Our lives may not depend on creatine, amino acids, and protein powders, but we still invest a great deal of time, money, and energy into products like these. Like a soldier placing their faith in an M-16 rifle, consumers want to trust that their supplements will deliver for them. Unfortunately for us, there are no required efficacy evaluations before a supplement is released. Any manufacturer can throw a bunch of ingredients into a capsule, and promise you the world with it. Who is there to make sure these products really work? Well, from now on, we are. The Proving Grounds is a new feature that involves the testing of sports supplements by an unbiased panel of consumers. For each installment we will pick a supplement, gather a group of testers, and track their progress while using it. Although it may not quite be a "clinical" study, we feel it will provide a fairly good opportunity to see how something might perform for you, in the real world.

Arachidonic Acid – Anabolic Agent

This first evaluation is of the anabolic supplement arachidonic acid, an agent I developed and patented myself. It is, in fact, the only supplement I am working on this year, as our company prepares to enter full clinical trials by the fall. It is no coincidence arachidonic acid came to be the first product we would examine in this section, as the column itself actually evolved from a product trial we were conducting on X-Factor with members of the bodybuilding.com and discoun-



A General inspecting an early model M-16. This weapon was approved only after vigorous endurance testing. If we evaluated supplements as seriously as machine-guns, there would be few market misfires! (Photo: Courtesy of Frank Iannamico, Author: Submachine guns of the USA)

tanobolics.com message forums. We decided we wanted to get people talking about the product, and to do so we'd just give it away and ask for consumers to keep progress reports. Although a risky move, we knew it would pay off, and it did. The trial turned out to be a big success for arachidonic acid. More than that though, there was tremendous interest in the testing concept. We quickly decided that we would do more trials, on a variety of different supplements, and publish all of the results in the magazine. "The Proving Grounds" was born.

Protocols

Getting back to the current trial, the protocol involved the use of 1,000mg (5 softgels) of arachidonic acid (X-Factor™) per day for 50 days. The dosage was taken 2 capsules in the AM, 2 at lunch, and 1 at dinner, in most cases. The vast majority of testers were trying to gain muscle mass (bulking) during this trial, although a few individuals were selected that were cutting and focused on muscle preservation instead. All subjects were asked to log their weekly progress, and report any changes in muscle size, fat mass, endurance, and strength. A total of 14 people have completed the trial as of this date, with their stats and summaries included for your review.

ACECOMBACT1

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	204.5	210	+ 5.5 lbs (+ 6.5 lbs Lean Mass)
Body Fat	n/a	n/a	- .5%
Bench Press	205 / 8	225 / 8	+ 20lbs
Squat	265 / 6	275 / 10	+ 10lbs & 4 reps
Deadlift	180 / 6-8	205 / 6-8	+ 25lbs

Truncated summary: "...Strength gains were very visible on all my lifts... Endurance was the most significant gain from this experiment. I was able to go longer in the gym without being tired... I didn't notice much of sides [effects]... My face skin became oily, other parts in the body the skin was dry and rough. I also noticed my joints were dryer, and noticed pain in my wrist and elbow. But I reduced dose of X-factor during last week, and added some MSM, and I was good after that. Bottom line: X-factor is very decent non-hormonal anabolic, and I think it has a lot of potential..."

AETERNITATIS

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	175	170	+ 5.5 lb Lean Mass est*
Body Fat	19%	16%	- 3%
Biceps	-	-	- .25"
Thighs	-	-	+ .5"
Bench Press	155 / 10	195 / 10	+ 40 lbs
Squat	255 / 10	300 / 10	+ 45 lbs

* Scale reported .5 lb lean mass gain when fat loss was accounted for. Tester discontinued creatine supplementation mid-cycle, which normally causes him a loss of 5lbs water weight. User reported significant gain of lean mass during cycle. 5.5 lb figure is an estimate based on final weight, fat loss, and creatine loss adjustment.

I haven't updated in a long time because I haven't really had anything different to say about X-Factor. The gains continue. It's that simple. I noticed that the increased amount of soreness also tapered off with continued usage. Either that or I just got accustomed to the soreness. X-Factor also seems to have good nutrient partitioning effects. Although I was eating huge amounts of food and definitely not eating clean everyday, I still didn't put on any extra fat. Actually, I think I lost a small amount of fat, which is amazing considering I wasn't trying to lean out... My lifts all skyrocketed during the first month of supplementation... and after a one week plateau, they are just starting to go up again... My body weight now is basically holding steady at 170 pounds but I'm noticeably leaner. For me, the coolest part about X-Factor (aside from the great gains) is the intensity it gave me. Maybe I was just psyched up to be making such great gains, I don't know. But when I was on X-Factor, I was so focused and so ready to hit everything hardcore... the mirror doesn't lie. What I see is reduced body fat and increased mass.

Truncated summary: Amazing gains in strength and size. Nutrient partitioning effects cause leanness even while bulking. Increased drive and focus in the gym. Increases strength but not recovery. Therefore: be careful about overtraining. Useful while cutting and bulking. I can sum it up even better. X-Factor is certainly the best, most effective supplement I have ever used... EVER.

ANIMALFAN

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	165	172	+ 7lbs (+ 9.5 lbs Lean Mass)

Body Fat	11%	9.5%	- 1.5%
Incline Bench	-	-	+ 25 lbs & reps
Squat	-	-	+ 40 lbs & reps

Truncated summary: "Body weight up to 172 this morning, up around 7 pounds. Bodyfat decreased by 1.5% total... I had raised calories up about 4/500 a day, to 33/3400. I had strength increases on all lifts; I was focused on bringing up my incline bench and squat. Squat is up 40 pounds, incline bench is up 25, all for reps... The pumps that I had noticed seemed to stick around till now, and the soreness I had in the beginning of the trial hasn't been an issue for the past 2/3 weeks. I think I had gotten used to it. Acne was an issue for me at the beginning for the cycle, but added vitamin b6 and using oxy pads quite often took care of that. I am very satisfied with this product. I'll surely be buying another run of it later in the year."

BADBOYSLAYER (CUTTING CYCLE)

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	224	214	- 10 lbs (+ 1.2 lbs Lean Mass)
Body Fat	16%	11%	- 5% (- 11.2 lbs Fat Mass)
Chest	48.25"	48.45"	+ .20"
Arms	17.75"	17.75"	n/c
Forearms	14.25"	14.5"	+ .5"
Legs	28.25"	28.5"	+ .25"
Calves	18"	18"	n/c
Waist	34.5"	32"	- 2.5"
Deadlift	352 X 6	352 X 8	+ 2 reps
Squat	308 X 6	308 X 8	+ 2 reps
Bench	202 X 6	206 X 6	+ 5 lbs

Truncated summary: "Lifts have not increased significantly, but this can be attributed to a calorie restricted diet and less intensity in the gym as this was a cutting cycle. I'm considering another cycle while bulking in a few months. I am impressed with this product because it provided good pumps and steady fat loss throughout the cycle with minimal side effects. My results have been significant enough to consider this a worthy supplement and others have experienced more than satisfactory gains in strength and LBM while maintaining or reducing their bodyfat. This is a very new and innovative supplement, I share Bill's outlook in terms of the product's potential."

BIGASSSNOWMAN

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	207	210	+ 3lbs (+ 9.2 lbs Lean Mass)
Body Fat	16.6%	13.6%	- 3%
Dead Lift (still leg)	-	-	+ 15 lbs
Incline Bench	-	-	+ 20 lbs
Lat Pull Downs	-	-	+ 20 lbs
Bent Over Rows	-	-	+ 15 lbs
Shoulder Press	-	-	+ 10 lbs
DB Skull Crushers	-	-	+ 5 lbs

Truncated summary: "Pumps have been unreal, better than any no2 I have taken. In October I was able to squat 238lbs 25 times. I just tried to get 225 as many times as I

could, and at 12 my pump was so big and intense that I could not do anymore. My legs get a little more sore than normal. Other than that the soreness only lasts about 1 day longer than normal. Strength: is up on everything but legs.. (hurt my knee). Bi's are about the same. Right now I'm just trying to maintain their size and not get them any bigger. Overall I would say this product is working pretty damn good, and I wish I could say that for some of the other shit I've wasted \$ on."

DREWKOWSKY (CUTTING CYCLE)

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	231	235	+ 4 lbs (+ 8.62 lbs Lean Mass)
Body Fat	-	-	- 2% (est. by 2" waist reduction)
Waist	40"	38"	- 2"
Bench Press	265-240	280	+ 15-40 lbs

Truncated summary: "This stuff has blown me away."

EME (CUTTING CYCLE/CONTEST PREP)

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	176	163	- 13 lbs
Lean Body Mass	155.59 lbs	151.92	- 3.67 lbs (mostly residual water)
Body Fat	11.6%	6.8%	- 4.8%

Truncated summary: "The goal of my training during this phase was to cut toward competition condition, while maintaining as much lean muscle as possible. . . I believe I successfully achieved my goal of cutting fat and maintaining muscle during the past 50 days, and I believe that X-Factor was a significant component in my success. The only side effect I noticed was increased soreness during the first few weeks. However, this soreness either went away, or I became more used to it, because I did not notice it after about week 3. I will definitely include X-Factor as part of my cutting programs in the future. I definitely feel it helped me maintain Lean Body Mass while dropping fat. I am also looking forward to including X-Factor as part of my mass building program in the off season..."

ERIC THERED

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	180	185	+ 5 lbs (+ 8 lbs Lean Mass)
Body Fat	-	-	- 1.5% +
Dead Lift (still leg)	300	340	+ 40 lbs
Squat	375	410	+ 35 lbs
Bench	205	225-230	+ 20-25 lbs

Truncated summary: "Effects-loss of B/F even when upping calories to over 4500 a day. Extreme pumps during and after working out. Soreness was rampant during cycle but wasn't as bad after week 4. Side effects-Nothing major to report. Acne increased slightly but nothing out of control. Joint soreness would come up from time to time, mostly numbing joint pain in my knees but nothing I couldn't deal with. Conclusion-I have to say this is THE BEST supplement I have used so far in my years of lifting. The gains after week 3 felt almost like being a newbie again, great supp. for cutting or bulking."

LAZ

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	198	205	+ 7 lbs
Body Fat	-	-	n/c
Bench Press	-	-	+ 25-30 lbs
Dumbbell Presses	-	-	+ 10 lbs

Truncated summary: "I am now weighing 205lbs, strength up about 25-30lbs on B-press, all dumbbell press weights have gone up about 10lbs. My body fat loss was extremely noticeable at first but then the results seemed to disappear and I had totally lost all visibility of all of my abdominals. I really did enjoy this product. I want to thank Bill again for letting me test it. I feel that the product does work but you have to give it a good window of time to kick in. I also feel that if the price of this stuff comes down many more people will buy it. I felt that this product gave me a more muscular physique, with some sick pumps in the gym. I feel that my results would have been greater given the fact that I was sick 2 or 3 times during the trial. For all people who are skeptical, go try this product out."



EME Competed on Saturday April 23, 2005. He took first place in his weight class (165 lbs) and the overall men's title, and in the process secured his WNSO Pro Card!

MAX VON

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	185	182	- 3 lbs (+ 12lbs Lean Mass)
Body Fat	n/a	8%	- 15 lbs
Waist	34"	31"	- 3"
Biceps	16"	16.75"	+ .75"
Chest	44"	47"	+ 3"
Bench Press	n/a	n/a	+ 50 lbs
Curls	n/a	n/a	+ 35 lbs
Shoulder Press	n/a	n/a	+ 80 lbs

Truncated summary: "Net gain that was done on Tuesday by personal trainer at my gym and this was done on a computer was 12lbs gain of lean mass and body fat 8%. As the trainer at the gym said, these results are incredible. Other than protein this was the only supp that I was taking... my weights have gone through the roof for lifting but because I have not posted on here I will simply tell you bench is up 50lbs, 6 reps curls up 35 lbs, 5 reps shoulder military press up 40lbs each side. Keep in mind shoulders are prob my strongest muscle. My body is very tight and shredded and I don't have the best diet."



Max Von, a police officer in Wisconsin, gained 3 inches on his chest, and lost 3 inches from his waist, during the trial. How is that for results?

MOUNTAINEER

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	217	223	+ 6lbs
Body Fat	n/a	n/a	nc
Strength	-	-	Significant Increases

Truncated summary: "... I ended the cycle at a total of only 42 days on X-factor due to some nagging shoulder pain. I felt that I had to give my body a break for a week or two to prevent further injury. This is an on going problem that has plagued me since I've started lifting weights. I don't believe it is any way related to the X-factor... Total weight gain at about 6 pounds. For me this is quite good. I do feel that this would have been more had I increased my calories... Overall I would give this product my thumbs up. I think this product helped me increase strength more than anything... I will definitely use it again. I feel to get the most from it you have to eat more calories to get the most from it. I do not know if the increased caloric demand is from protein synthesis or what but I do feel it is definitely there."

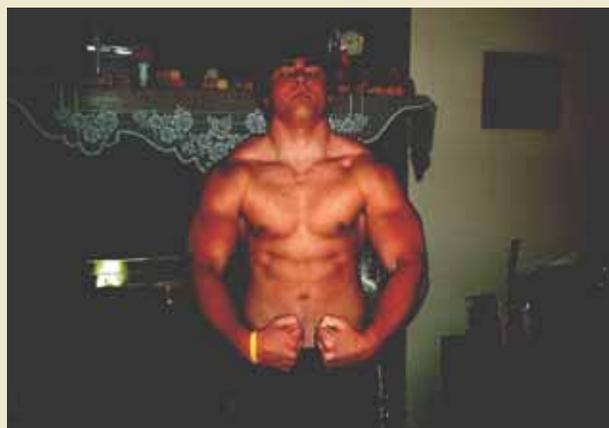
NEILB

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	193	204	+ 11 lbs
Body Fat	n/a	n/a	n/a
Strength	-	-	Significant Increases

Truncated summary: "Overall my results have been really satisfactory. Remember how I started with my bodyweight of 193lbs? - Well after eight weeks I now weigh 204lbs. - that's an 11 lb increase. My wife and kids have really noticed my muscle size development. I love it. Every workout I did there was an increase in strength. And all I did was increase my intake of protein- whatever I could find - protein shake, chicken sandwich, tuna, etc. Needless to say, my workout intensity really improved. Even now, I can still feel the flu-like soreness on my muscles after working out. And the muscle pump is really great... I'll probably cycle off for a month and then resume for another eight weeks."

SIXABS

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	180	187	+ 7 lbs (+ 7.9 lbs Lean Mass)
Body Fat	-	-	-.5%
Squat	-	-	+ 30 lbs
Deadlift	-	-	+ 20 lbs
Beanch	-	-	n/c
Pullups	-	-	+ 10 lbs
Curls	-	-	+ 3 reps
Triceps Extensions	-	-	+ 10 lbs



SixAbs - Showing off his newly thickened and more defined physique.

Truncated summary: "No increased acne. Pumps during workouts were amazing, freaking amazing. BTW what's most amazing is that for most of this cycle I was eating maintenance calories. Good product, and I recommend it. So far all the Molecular Nutrition products I've used, I've liked. Thanks William for the opportunity and kick ass results!"

ZACKATTACH43

Measurement	Start	End	Change
Body Weight	191	196	+ 5 lbs (+6.53 lbs Lean Mass)
Body Fat	14.9%	13.7%	-.8% (increased abdominal visibility)
Chest	46"	46.5"	+ .5" (more developed and ripped)
Waist	35.75"	35"	-.75"
Forearms	12.5"	13"	+ .5" (new exercises also started)
Arms	15.5"	15.75"	+ .25" (more triceps mass)
Calves	15"	15.25"	+ .25"
Quads	24.5"	24.5"	n/c – groin injury
Bench	185 / 7 reps	225 / 5	significant increase
Lat Pulldowns	120 / 8	150 / 6	significant increase
Pull Ups	13	22	+ 9 reps
Squats	225 / 6	n/c	injury
Bend Over Calf Raises	320 / 15	360 / 15	+ 40 lbs
Seated Smith Raises	105 / 8	125 / 4	n/a

Truncated summary: "Other lifts were about the same; those are the ones with the major differences. In not a single lift did anything go down. I never experienced any pumps the people were talking about: only pumps were in my arms as usual. It did help increase in my strength, and also seemed to help with fat loss - more so towards my image in the mirror than in the actual numbers itself. My girlfriend noticed a tremendous increase in my size and thought I needed to upgrade my polo shirt sizes even though she dug the sleeves looking like there were about to rip. My pecs are more finely tuned conditioned wise, especially the outer and have a more ideal shape. My forearm size went up mostly due to the new exercises introduced at the beginning of this log when I started having 2 workout partners (aka the ego contest or pissing contest). Drawbacks: 2nd week I experienced some burps that seemed like X factor, only happened after the morning dose but subsided after a couple days. Acne did increase slightly on my back. It cooled off but still there was a slight increase. Can't take pain meds, there was about 4 times I had a real bad headache and just pulled through it without the pain meds. I limited my consumption of Omega 3s. Only consumption was olive oil when I bake my chicken or to coat my steaks before cooking. This is not really a drawback, but for most of us it might be. I am used to creatine/NO products and these are products I can "feel" working or whatever. This is one product that requires patience and evaluations in the mirror each week to properly assess the progress."

Summing up the Results

The results should speak for the product much better than I can. If you look closely at the numbers reported for the various individual users, you will see some very remarkable trends. Not only were rapid strength and size gains reported across the board, which in of itself is a rare accomplishment for a natural dietary supplement, but the vast majority of users trying to gain mass also reported a significant loss of fat at the same time. Max Von and Zackattach43, for example, both kept chest and waist measurements during their trials, and in both

cases reported an increase in chest size that coincided with a decrease in waist size. In fact, Max noted a remarkable 3 inch change in each measurement! How often do you see someone lose 3 inches on their waist, and gain 3 inches on their chest, during the same 7-week period? The total average gain of lean mass during this trial was between 8- 9 lbs, which equates to well over 1 lb of lean mass per week for 7 consecutive weeks.

There were two dropouts during the trial (Dito and ReD3784), with both users discontinuing due to side effects. One was complaining of acne, which was likely caused by an increase in androgen receptor density (a benefit of X-Factor, but may cause acne if you are sensitive to it). The other tester noticed a flare-up of an already pre-existing benign prostate hypertrophy (BPH) condition, perhaps intensified by the greater inflammation during the cycle. Still, both users reported noticing measurable gains before stopping, and stated they are likely to try it again at another time. Overall, the success rate of the product during this investigation was 100%. None of those taking the product finished without reporting significant progress in strength, size, fat loss, or muscle retention. There were no skeptics or arachidonic acid "non-responders" to be found when the trial was over.

For full trial logs and discussion, please visit the supplement discussion forums at bodybuilding.com and discountanabolics.com.

Trial Completions - Quick Reference

Name	Gain/Loss (Lean Body Mass)	Interest	Result
Acecombact1	+ 6.5lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
Aeternitatis	+ 5.5lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
Animal Fan	+ 9.5lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
BadBoySlayer	- 11.2lbs	Cutting	Success
Bigasssnowman	+ 9.2lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
Drewkowsky	+ 8.62lbs LBM / - 4.62 Fat	Cutting	Success
EME	- 13 lbs	Cutting	Success
EricTheRed	+ 8 lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
Laz	+ 7 lbs	Bulking	Success
Max Von	+ 12 lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
Mountaineer	+ 6 lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
NeilB	+ 11 lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
Six Abs	+ 7.9 lbs LBM	Bulking	Success
ZackAttach43	+ 6.53 lbs LBM	Bulking	Success