

# Criminal Fraud... or Unbelievable Stupidity<sup>1</sup>

**Arthur Jones**

I think it is about time for somebody to make some very plain statements... and if you are involved in any aspect of coaching or physical training, then the following may be one of the most important things you will ever read.

Universal Athletic Sales Company is guilty of outright CRIMINAL FRAUD... or, if not, then they are certainly guilty of almost unbelievable STUPIDITY.

Additionally... they are guilty of libel, slander and malicious lies. As well as utterly false claims and phony documentation.

In brief... they have been acting in panic for more than a year; a panic brought about, it appears, from their own rapidly declining sales... which situation they obviously blame on the rapid growth of my company, Nautilus Sports/Medical Industries. Until now, I have remained silent in the face of the most vicious smear tactics that I have ever encountered, but enough is enough. Many people reading this will have heard some of a long list of lies from Universal... here is an opportunity to read the truth.

LET ME BE VERY PLAIN... the statements and claims now being made by Universal are not merely “over-statements” nor anything even approaching the misleading claims of some other companies in the field of exercise. INSTEAD... they are making statement that are outright lies. Quoting “experts” who do not exist. Trying to “prove” their lies on the basis of research that never occurred.

The field of exercise has been almost literally knee-deep in outright criminal fraud for the last thirty years... the health foods, the protein supplements, the drugs, the sauna belts, the body wraps, and a long list of worthless or near-worthless equipment; all of the above listed items are of no demonstrated value... and the people promoting them are guilty of criminal fraud, or almost unbelievable stupidity.

YET... hidden beneath a vast covering of worthless products and phony claims, the demonstrated benefits of proper exercise are certainly of great value. The problem has been (and the problem remains)... just how do you separate fact from fiction? How do you know what to believe? Or who to believe?

I have personally been interested in exercise for more than thirty-five years, and I realized long ago that a very large part of the commercial interests in this field were engaged in outright fraud... and that a large number of other involved parties were preaching nonsense, even though their intentions may have been good and they may have been sincere in their false beliefs.

AS A RESULT... many coaches look upon the entire subject as just so much hogwash, sincerely convinced that exercise is of little or no value for their athletes. While many other coaches are at least aware of the value of exercise... but simply don't know how to go about producing the benefits they are seeking.

In this atmosphere, I am frankly surprised that exercise has been given the attention that it has... and because of this atmosphere of frauds, kooks and outright nuts, I personally tried to keep myself as far as possible from any involvement; while remaining interested for personal reasons.

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For a period of thirty years I supported myself in a number of ways, by operating a Latin American airline, by producing and directing more than 300 films for television, and importing literally millions of wild animals and tropic fish... and, during all of those years, I had no slightest interest in becoming commercially involved in the field of exercise. But I did not lose my interest in exercise during those years, and I continued to conduct extensive research for my own personal satisfaction... to me, exercise was a hobby; even if, as happened to be the case, a hobby that took a great deal of my time and no small amount of money.

So my interests have been many and varied... flying, motion pictures, wild animals, and exercise. I still own and operate four personal aircraft; a helicopter, a seven-passenger single-engine airplane, a six-passenger twin-engine airplane, and a twenty-passenger jet. All of which aircraft are used extensively in the conduct of my business. And I still hold a current Airline Transport Pilot license... after more than thirty-five years and 20,000 hours of flying all over the world.

I also own and still operate the largest and best-equipped motion-picture production studio in the state of Florida... currently, I am in the middle of producing a film on the physical rehabilitation of Dick Butkus; starting with his most recent knee operation, filmed in the operating room... this film will show the detailed progress of his physical rehabilitation, regardless of the final outcome, following one of the most serious knee injuries that I have ever seen.

And... I still love animals; at the moment I have a 12 foot, 665 pound, male alligator in a pool right next to my office. By hand feeding him and forcing him to exercise, I hope (and expect) to have his weight over 900 pounds by this time next year. My wife as a Jaguarondi (South American jungle cat) that has been in the family for more than nine years... and she also has a rather large collection of exotic insects, including some giant scorpions that I brought her from Bangkok last year. My nephew is momentarily raising a python and a rattlesnake.

And... at the moment, I am in the midst of building what I expect to be the largest and finest Human Performance laboratory in the world; build for the sole purpose of conducting large scale research into all aspects of exercise as related to human performance. Which facilities will be available for the use of any legitimate person, at no charge... scientists, doctors, coaches and athletes will be welcome to conduct any sort of research into human performance, under ideal conditions.

Why all the personal detail? Which detail (being personal) should not be of interest to anybody except myself and close associates. Simply because employees of Universal Athletic Sales Company have been spreading quite a different story... although they have as yet lacked the gall to put it in print, or even say it to my face.

SO... since they are apparently afraid to, I will put their stories in print. According to them, I am a heroin smuggler, a member of the mafia, a professional killer, a phony and an outright liar... among other things.

According to them, I have personally made threats against the lives of several members of their staff.

NOW... the truth of the matter is that I am in fact a rather blunt individual; I say what I mean and I mean what I say... and I have no time for fools and frauds. And I refuse to sit still and remain silent in the face of outrage.

THUS... over a year ago, at the national Trainers Convention in Atlanta, I did in fact confront two employees of Universal. One of these men, Ed Burke, had photocopied some of our literature, after adding accusations of fraud, and was handing it out to people visiting the convention. I personally saw him hand one such piece of literature to a trainer, and I then read it; whereupon, I approached Burke and requested that he give me a similar copy. He at first refused, saying that it was "private material"... so private, I guess, that he could only give it to trainers.

So, since he was freely handing out this material to anybody but me, I plainly informed him that I intended to take a copy for myself... and that the only way he could stop me would be by force; and that if he tried force I would be only too happy to fist-fight him there and then... which I thought was a reasonably fair offer, since he is about twenty years younger than I am, at least four inches taller and twenty pounds heavier, and an ex-champion hammer thrower. I also informed him that I would have him charged with criminal fraud and arrested by a federal marshal. So he gave me a copy of the literature.

Then, later, Burke told a number of people that I made threats against his life... although, even later, he assured me to my face that he had NEVER made such statements to anybody; that, in fact, he had never said anything to anybody that could even be twisted into being a critical statement regarding me or my products.

Ed Burke is a liar... and, in due course, we will prove it in court; with a long list of witnesses that will put him in jail where he belongs... highly respected medical doctors, coaches, trainers, people that a judge will not doubt.

A bit later, following my confrontation with Burke, I had a firm talk with another employee of Universal (although his name escapes me at the moment, I have witnesses to this conversation also)... and I told him plainly that I was very tired of his lies. He had been telling people that I was a close personal friend of his, that he "knew me well"... when, in fact, I had never set eyes on him before. And, using this pretended personal knowledge of me, he had then been telling people that my products and ideas were of no slightest value.

Yet later, I reported the whole matter to Otho Davis and Bobby Gunn and to the man in charge of the convention (another name that escapes me at the moment)... and I lodged a firm complaint against the actions of these Universal employees. Upon proving my charges to the satisfaction of these men, I was told that Universal's exhibit would be kicked out of the convention if I wished to push the matter; but they also said that they would prefer to drop the matter since the convention was almost finished in any case, and since the involved Universal employees had been given firm notice to cease and desist.

Several weeks passed, and then Harold Zinkin (the original inventor of the Universal exercise machine and now an officer in the company) called me from his office in California... during the first part of the conversation he apologized at great length for the actions of the Universal employees in Atlanta, and assured me that nothing like that would ever occur again.

He also told me that the Nautilus Machines (my product) represented a great leap forward in the field of exercise... and at one point in the conversation he went so far as to offer to send me advance copies of all future Universal advertising; so that, he said "they (Universal) would have a chance to change their advertisements" if there was anything that I objected to.

The implication being, of course, that I would reciprocate... that I would send them advance copies of my ads.

So I told him... "No, Harold, you just go ahead and claim anything you please... and we will continue telling people the truth... and in the end, we will see who comes out on top."

"Well," he said, "everybody has to make claims in order to stay in business."

So I told him... "No, they don't. Did it ever occur to you to try telling people the truth?"

Apparently it hasn't occurred to him... because he lied to me during that conversation, and he has repeatedly lied to my face since then, and he is currently involved in a large-scale advertising program that is nothing more than a pack of lies.

A few months after that telephone conversation, Universal suddenly sprang their 'HERO' onto an unsuspecting world... the 'great doctor' Gideon Ariel, according to their ads had invented a new and totally revolutionary type of Universal exercise machine with variable resistance. Which variable resistance, of course, was "exactly correct."

Well the facts are that Gideon Ariel is an outright fraud... AND, rather than providing perfectly balanced "variable resistance," their machines DOES NOT VARY AT ALL, remains absolutely constant in all positions.

When I first saw their initial ads, concerning the new Centurion line of Universal machines that supposedly provided variable resistance, I simply could not figure out how it was supposed to VARY... then, when I saw the machine itself, I instantly realized that it doesn't vary, that it is exactly the same in every position.

So I approached the great doctor, Gideon Ariel, and I asked him... "How much does your leg press unit increase during the full stroke?"

And he said, "The exact amount for the mean average." (which is pure double talk, nonsense).

And I said, "Tell me in figures, so a dumb guy like me can understand. What percentage does it increase?"

"Eight-five percent," he said.

Whereupon I looked at him with an expression of obvious disbelief, and said, "Now, Gideon."

So he said... "Well, actually, this machine increases eighty-three percent."

And again I said, "Now, Gideon."

And he said... "Well, the truth of the matter is that this PARTICULAR machine increases thirty-five percent."

So, for a third time, I said, "Now, Gideon."

And he said... "Well, this INDIVIDUAL machine that we have here today increases thirty-two percent; but the product model will increase eighty-three percent."

So I said, "Not with that principle it won't... in order to vary the resistance you must vary the torque; and in order to vary the torque you have to change either the leverage or the perpendicular force, or both... and since both remain constant in your machine, it should be obvious to an idiot that the resistance doesn't vary."

Then I offered to bet him a thousand dollars that his machine didn't vary at all, that the resistance remained absolutely constant in every position. He refused to bet. So I offered to bet him ten-thousand dollars against a hundred dollars of his money, and he still refused.

Later that night I offered to bet one-hundred-thousand dollars against a "used doughnut" that the Universal machine didn't vary at all; this bet being offered to (and refused by) Chuck Coker, the President of Universal.

Then, a few weeks later, I heard that Coker and Zinkin were telling people that I backed down from a bet.

When I first met Gideon Ariel I didn't know him from Adam's off ox... but it didn't take long to check him out... and, in any case, it was obvious at first glance that he was either an utter fool or guilty of criminal fraud; if he really believed his statements, then he was almost unbelievably stupid... and if he was aware that his statements were lies, then he was guilty of criminal fraud. Take your pick, there is no other choice, fool or fraud.

In a period of less than a minute he told me that the machine varied 85%, 83%, 35%, and 32%... and then refused to bet when I called him a liar to his face in front of witnesses. So I felt I had very good reason to check him out... and I did.

Having done so, and having discovered much what I expected to after meeting Ariel... I invited Professor Stan Plagenhoef of the University of Massachusetts to come to the Trainers convention in Kansas City for the purpose of confronting the great doctor Ariel.

Professor Plagenhoef, you see, was Gideon's former teacher... and, at the moment, is bringing charges against Ariel for fraud, lies, false statements and false claims and similar outrages.

At the convention in Kansas City, we met face to face in front of many witnesses (Dick Butkus, among others)... and I said to Gideon, "Tell me again, Gideon, about you being a professor at the University of Massachusetts; I want to hear you say it in front of a real professor."

He said nothing... after all, what could he say? Having been caught in a bare-faced lie.

Then I said... "Gideon, I want you to know that your Professor, Dr. Plagenhoef, stood up for you... you see, Gideon, I was worried about you; I thought you were guilty of criminal fraud... so I asked your professor if it was really possible for you to be stupid enough to believe your own claims. And he assured me that you were... he told me that you were so dumb that you were capable of believing almost anything."

Again Gideon said nothing. What could he say?

I could go on for another hundred pages... but to what avail? The facts are that Universal is guilty of either criminal fraud or almost unbelievable stupidity, probably a bit of both.

And the fact is that I am personally sick and tired of remaining silent in the face of the outrageous personal attacks that they have made on both myself and my products. So I will see them in court... since I have already filed criminal charges against all parties involved.

For your part, be you coach, trainer, doctor or athlete... it would pay you to investigate the facts; and if you have been unlucky enough to purchase a Universal machine advertising as providing "variable resistance" then you are also in a position to bring charges of fraud against Universal.

If you want the facts, and the real value of exercise is such that you should investigate it closely, then write for a copy of one of the films that we are producing... films that will present the facts in a clear, simple and undeniable manner. Films produced by real experts... both in the field of exercise and in the field of film production.

The real facts on the subject of exercise are actually quite simple. UNFORTUNATELY... the whole subject has been clouded by so many lies for so long that most people don't know where to turn. It is my intention to try to correct that situation to the degree that I can.

I remained silent in the fact of Universal's smear tactics to long as they were directed against me personally, or against my products... but I have now been forced to speak up by their attacks against others, against research scientists and medical doctors that have contributed to our work at Nautilus. Dr. Elliott Plese of Colorado State University has been one such target... having supervised the "Colorado Experiment," during which we clearly established the fact that a very small amount of proper exercise is capable of producing large-scale and very rapid strength and muscular body-mass increases, he then became another target for Universal's smear tactics. To some people they deny his very existence. While telling others that he is a flagrant homosexual. Well, if so... then he has fooled me, and fooled his wife and six daughters as well.

Recently, an employee of Universal in New York told a newspaper reporter from the University of Massachusetts that... “Gideon Ariel is so valuable that ANOTHER COMPANY (meaning, but not saying, Nautilus) tried to hire him; and then made threats against his life if he refused the offer.” In that instance, and perhaps in others, Universal did not use our name while making such statements... but that is unusual; NORMALLY, they do name us very clearly.

Not being aware of the real facts, many people have undoubtedly been convinced by the lies, false claims and malicious statements made by Universal... although I personally feel that they have done themselves far more harm than they have done to us; so this will probably be the last word on this matter from me, since I do not intend to waste any more of my time by getting involved in a long-winded and protracted exchange of claims and counterclaims of no value and very little interest to anybody. But having carefully documented the above charges against Universal, I will have quite a lot more to say in court.