

From the Ground Up!!!



Daniel John

Introduction

This book “doesn’t sound like me.” I keep hearing that when people start reading the text. “You’re not angry,” “You don’t seem to be ranting,” and “You don’t sound like you are going to strangle anybody” are three of the comments that I have heard from the early reviews.

Well, okay. You can fully expect that in the upcoming books, but here, “From the Ground Up,” we are going to go to try to encourage people to change the whole modern paradigm of training and get back to the roots of the sport: pick heavy stuff up.

I get dozens of emails a week and talk on the telephone with people who all say the following basic statement: “I didn’t know I could do it.” What is “it?” Simply, it is facing down a barbell, picking it up and putting it overhead.

That is exactly how I learned to lift. In my very first published article, I wrote:

“When my friends and I used to lift the old six foot bar with cement filled weights, we all thought we were pretty strong. Then, Dad would ask us to help him move a car engine or open a rusted jar of nuts and bolts, or put the ping pong table up on a rack for storage. Yes, I was the strongest kid in the four-house area, but every Dad had that scary kind of strength that allows one to pick an engine out of a Pontiac station wagon and carry it to the lawn.” (*From “The Dinosaur Files”*)

And, how did me and my friends lift? We had the bar on the ground, picked it up and pushed, pressed or kicked the bar overhead. When somebody learned to clean the bar in one motion...rather than the five or six that the rest of us used as a “technique”...we all adopted the new, better method. Was it perfect? No. Did we get better and better in our sports? Yes. Did we get hurt? Well, of course not...we didn’t even know that you could get hurt “playing.”

I want to bring the joy back into lifting weights. I want to see people having fun again in the weight room. I want people to go into their home gym and train without feeling like they can’t because they don’t know the most recent research. For all these reasons, I titled this book, “From the Ground Up.” Sure, on one hand it deals with taking the bar from the ground to overhead. Yet, it also reflects my goal of getting across the lessons of training...the long-term approach...so the athlete (you) can deal with in-season and off-season issues, some insights about nutrition and, most important, learning NOT to make the same mistakes over and over and over and over again.

In the upper right hand corner of the book, you will see pictures of the Snatch and the Clean and Jerk. By flipping the pages, you can see the basic lifts in “motion.” Nothing about this book...or the series of planned books...is too technical. Let’s be honest, the most elaborate thing I have in my gym is a pair of sawhorses. I’m not exactly “cutting edge” yet...

Throughout this text, you will find great pictures from both Charles Staley and Mike Rosenberg. I appreciate the athletes who have allowed me to experiment with them to learn these methods better!

Thank you!

Thank you to my brothers Rich, Ray, Phil and, especially, Gary who first taught me sports; Coach Bob Lualhauti, Coach Ralph Maughan and Dick Notmeyer who raised my sights, thank you; John Powell, Bill Witt, and Brian Oldfield who made me a student again, thank you; Eric Seubert, Paul Northway, Nick Gibson, Nick Aiello, Nick Hristou, Lauren Dorsch, Matt Webber, John Price, John Richardson, Taylor Arrigo-Jones, Steve Diaz, Eric Lindquist and a host of others who wouldn't let me quit, thank you; Mike Rosenberg, Steve Shafley, and others, who have guided my thoughts, thank you. To Charles Staley for encouraging me to jump in and start writing about these odd passions that I enjoy, thank you! Tiffini John, who understands training better than anyone, thank you; Kelly and Lindsay, who have taught me patience, thank you. Finally, a special thank you to my Mom and Dad, who have passed over into eternal life for not only the gift of life, but all those long car drives to remote, lifeless places to cheer me on in my career.

To all the others whom I forgot...Thank you!!!

Daniel John

Cover Shot: Dan is teaching Nick Radonjic the “Modern Method of Pulling. Nick’s toes are on weight plates, he is striving to push his butt to the stick while concomitantly trying to stick his chin in the cup of Dan’s hand. His hamstrings are beginning to shake...the perfect sign for a lift.

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You know, we all talk about the issues raised in this chapter...but few go the next step up the mountain and implement these ideas. We start with the base, nutrition and work out way up through the need for "planned recovery," learning from our experiences and, ultimately, using these lessons from our past to successfully chart our future. Yes, it's simple, but not easy...

In the last chapter, we discussed Dick Notmeyer's concept of the "Tranquil Mind." Here, we will begin to kick around some of the ideas...some of the practical steps...that lead to this state. Trust me, having your athletic shoes in your carry on bag will keep you calmer when the airlines have lost the rest of your luggage!



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In Las Vegas, I was asked to “frame” long term training success. The DVD of this workshop will be available very soon...wait for details.

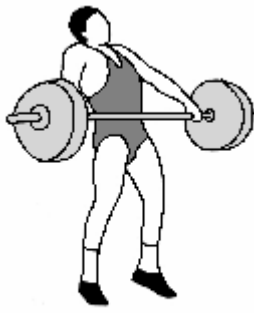
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The following is from a very special book that I wrote for a very special reason for a very special person. This little entry seemed very fitting for our final chapter.

Special Supplement: The Pacifica Barbell Club Materials

*Enjoy! The world’s finest gym was also one of the world’s smallest. Enjoy my memories of **real** training...from a master!*





The Basic Premise...



As you crack open this first book of a series of books dedicated to simple training methods, you must be wondering why do we need another book. Hasn't all this been said already? Nope.

You see, I've been there. I've trained most of my life in garages, or rooms that were at one time garages, patios, porches, cement pads, and basements. I've had to lift the bar and avoid hitting the beams in an unfinished room. I've had to be sure to stand on the right pieces of decking so you don't bend the floor and risk breaking through to the ground. You see, I've been there.

This book is simply dedicated to all those people who have been led to believe this modern lie that the only way to train is in a bright temperature controlled room with Top Forty tunes playing on the perfect stereo system. There are no mirrors in the real world of athletics and there doesn't have to be any in your gym either. Machines are not the answer to your fat loss or muscle building questions.

I assume only one piece of equipment: a bar. It can be anything, by the way. I have trained for national level meets with a six foot bar that didn't rotate and the plates only went to 25 pounds. That's a lot of 25s on the bar! Sure, I am going to recommend that maybe you go to a hardware store to upgrade your "gym," but you don't need to do that, if you don't want to spend money. I understand...

The bar will be on the ground. I have full faith in that, by the way, as gravity seems to always make the weights return to the floor. So, "From the Ground Up" is based on this question: How can we can a total body workout that will cut fat, increase muscle and improve sports performance with just one bar and nothing else? The answer has been forgotten for a few decades, but I promise you that you will quickly appreciate how simple...how exhausting...how exhilarating...how fun...how challenging...working out "From the Ground Up" can be for you.

We begin with the "Rapid Ascent" Program based directly on the first training program I ever learned. It still amazes me that this program can still burn fat and build muscle as well as any computerized, machine laden program one can find. If you just want to jump in...jump in there. The next two chapters introduce you to the basics of the Olympic Lifts: the Snatch, where you take the bar from the floor to overhead in one motion, and the Clean and Jerk, where you will take the bar off the ground and bring it to your chest (you see...you "clean" the floor of the bar) and then, in one explosive total body motion, push the bar overhead. If you get good enough, you can be in the Olympics. The first of these two chapters walks you through the basics of learning the lifts. Even if you are a master, take a few minutes to review these tips and ideas. The second of these chapters introduces the "Three Keys" and we will discuss the two physical issues, Leg Strength and Pulling Strength.

The next chapter discusses what I consider the core of athletic success...correctly climbing the ladder of nutrition, recovery, record keeping and wisdom from experience.



Simply by taking the time to think about things a little early will practically guarantee success later on. Yet, few do this! This chapter knits together the basic bricks of an athlete or health enthusiast's career, from something as simple as eating breakfast every day or keeping a journal, to approaching national or international competition. Taking care of the details...*early*...is usually the key to preparing the athletic mindset needed for victory. When proper preparation meets competition, the athlete can relax and smile knowing the work has been done. We call this the "Tranquil Mind."

Following the chapters that deal with the practical side of training, the next two chapters deal with the "thinking" behind my approach to sports and life. The "Summa" is a series of six basic points about...well, everything. Recently, I added the sixth concept, but it might simply be considered the "heart" behind the practical principles. The next section, the Question and Answers, deals with a series of seemingly simple issues that underscore some of the great issues facing athletes today. People will ask me a very simple question, yet either I am extremely long winded (probably the right answer!) or the question simply opens up a whole discussion that we may simply have missed.

The last chapter might seem odd, but, in my heart, I think that understanding the roles of "Successful Failure" and "Failing Success" in one's life can make a break a person.

The heart and soul of this book is the belief...my belief...that the athlete, the fitness enthusiast, or the health seeker is capable of training at level of excellence unmatched by most gyms, spa or training centers all in comfortable surroundings of their home gym. Contrary to popular opinion...and an industry fueling this notion ...you can train at home with a minimal investment of a simple bar. In fact, if you ask around, you might have a cousin, friend, or neighbor with one rusting in their garage right now. That's how I started and that is the same path that many, many other athletes began their careers. So, climb on board and let's get started.

Summary:

1. Get a barbell and let's go!



The "Rapid Ascent" Program

*If you are too busy to read the whole book... this chapter is for you...
The mistake that most coaches and athletes make is that they too quickly follow the elite programs of world or Olympic champions and ignore the essential basics, the building blocks, of proper training. With one bar and three simple exercises, you can gather MOST of the benefits of the most elite, computerized, high tech training programs. Maybe even more...consult the "Summa Liftingologica" for the answers to that conundrum.*



The Southwood Junior High Weightlifting Program

Every so often, I will get an email from a high school coach about teaching a group of kids to lift weights. The emails often sound like the task...to get kids to lift...is insurmountable. Some of the coaches sound like they need a miracle worker to come in and exorcize the student body before beginning the exercise program.

I always argue back to these fine men and women that it **can** be done...easily and inexpensively. I can't claim any credit from the following program, but I am indebted to Mr. Dave Freeman, my ninth grade P.E. coach for making us do this program!

After eight years at St. Veronica's School, I transferred to Southwood Junior High to begin junior high. It was a helluva transition. From Irish Nuns to public school is transition enough, but I was also going to play football. At 118 pounds of ...ahem...pure muscle, it was obvious to everyone I needed to lift weights.

It was at this time I was introduced to Southwood's lifting program. In a portable building, the school had outlaid about 15 of those cement filled weightlifting sets that everyone from my generation remembers as their first bar.

Mr. Freeman spent little time explaining the "rep-set" system of 8-6-4 because of everybody, except me, knew what to do. That is part of the brilliance of the program...you learned it once and then you lifted. Not exactly rocket science...but who needs rocket science on the football field?

The program was very simple. First, groups of four boys were given a bar. The bars were weighted from very light...maybe 25 pounds...up to perhaps close to 100 pounds. Each cohort of boys would lift one at a time, put the bar down, then the next boy would lift. The four would constantly move from lifter to watcher...the bar never stopped. The three sets (explained in just a moment) would not take very long...in fact, sometimes it was hard to catch your breath in time for your next set.

The reps were very simple:

First set: 8 repetitions

Second set: 6 repetitions

Third set: 4 repetitions

The goal was simple: when you got all 18 reps (8+6+4), you added weight. If you started with a bar that was too light, the next workout, you would be bumped up to the next weight and a stronger group. (Of course, actual variations could include making a whole new group with more weight, too...or whatever necessary to make the group work together).

The program involved four lifts:

- 1 Power Clean
- 2 Military Press
- 3 Front Squat

Each lift was done in the 8-6-4 format. The bar was cleaned (once) for the set of Military

Presses and the bar was also cleaned (once) for the Front Squats. So, each workout the athlete cleaned the bar from the ground to the chest 22 times. If, as some people believe, the Power Clean is the "King of the Exercises," that is a lot of reps with the King!

To "hurry up" the training...as if it was necessary, there were times when Mr. Freeman recommended combining the Power Clean and Military Presses...one clean and one press, repeated for a total of eight reps. This was done with a lighter weight. One could also do the Front Squats after the clean and presses, too. I have only done this once...and it was an amazing cardiovascular workout.

Each day, to warm up, we had to "run two laps and an obstacle course." The two laps were about 600 meters and the obstacle course had a wall, various upper body challenges, and some balance walking. All in all, this was not a bad program.

We trained this program three days a week during the summer before football season...when we could. Unfortunately, as I was unschooled in proper lifting logic, I started to focus on the bench press in high school and erred by ignoring the clean, press and front squat. I was on the right track here, but, as youth often does, I went the wrong way.

The "Rapid Ascent" Program

Three Days a Week in the Weightroom:

Power Clean

8-6-4 reps

Military Press

8-6-4 reps

Front Squat

8-6-4 reps

Increase weight when you get all the reps!

Other "musts:"

Begin each morning with a good breakfast including protein.

Try to eat five to nine servings of fruit and vegetables a day.

Sleep for more than eight hours a day (Eight hours and one minute is more!)

Wear your seatbelt.

Don't smoke.

Drink water as your major beverage.

That's it...that's the "Rapid Ascent Program." As I always note when I explain one of my training programs...it looks so easy on paper! Now, go and do it!

Summary:

No, it's not a perfect program, but it ain't bad either! One bar on the floor with absolutely nothing else in the way of equipment can help you on the path to athletic success and your goals in body composition. Many people have used this program as a "fat loss" training program and have found it to be excellent because of the speed of the workout and the lack of stress on the body's resources. When trying to lose fat, it is a good idea not to beat the body up as it often causes the system to cling on to fat even harder than before.

Don't forget the basics of sleeping and eating, too. It makes no sense to begin a rigorous training program, then to undermine it with poor nutrition or simple exhaustion. And, wear your seat belt!

After you finish this workout a few times, you might be ready to start considering something else...like the Olympic lifts.





From the Floor to Overhead: Olympic Lifting

Squat right. Clean right. Put the bar overhead. Repeat. That is usually my little formula for teaching people the basics of getting strong. But, people always insist on the follow up questions: What do I do now? How do I measure up?



I can remember being told that the Olympic Lifts were dead just a few years ago. The machines, the "protocols," the safety issues, and the this's and that's had put the nails in the coffin for those who snatch and clean and jerk. Do a snatch at a spa and the first question from the spandex bunch is "what does that build?" Then, the owner kicks you out for scaring the grandmas in the step aerobic class.

But recently, there has been a surge of interest in the sport and the lifts. Football coaches, breaking from the decades of "following the follower" and non-productive training, have embraced the snatch and clean as basic training for their athletes. Of course, track and field athletes, at least at the elite level, seem to have continued pulling and pushing in the increasingly darker ends of gyms and spas. The internet, for all its problems, seems to have been part of this phenomenon that has found a resurgence in the popularity of the O lifts.

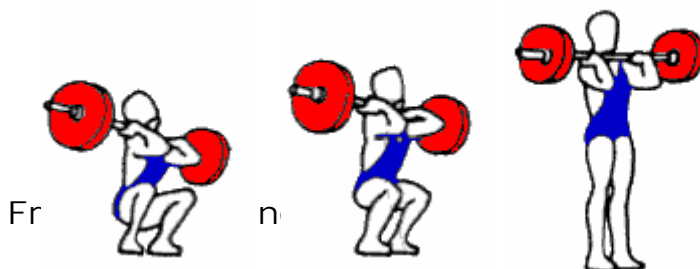
Starting the true neophyte off in the O lifts is a matter of debate, but I would follow the Bulgarian method. Simply, the Bulgarians begin by teaching a perfect deep back squat. This means that the athlete has a high bar placement on the upper traps, the chest is held up, and the lower back tucked in. The athlete sits straight down "between" the legs and continues down until "the ass is on the grass."



What does "between the legs" mean? One of the true keys to squatting and the O lifts is this simple concept. I teach it this way: have the athlete stand arms length from a door knob. Grab the handle with both hands and get your chest "up." Up? I have the athlete imagine being on a California beach when a swimsuit model walks by.

Immediately, the athlete puffs up the chest which tightens the lower back and locks the whole upper body. The lats naturally spread a bit and the shoulders come back "a little." Continuing with the arms in the "hammer throwing" position, with the Muscle Beach chest, lean back away from the door.

Now, lower yourself down. How? Well, I teach young lifters to think that their feet were stuck to the ceiling and they would have to pull their butt to the ceiling. Sure, an odd image, but it works. What people discover at this moment is a basic physiological fact: the legs are NOT stuck like stilts under the torso. Rather, the torso is slung between the legs. (*Below: The "Front Squat," with the bar resting on the shoulders*)

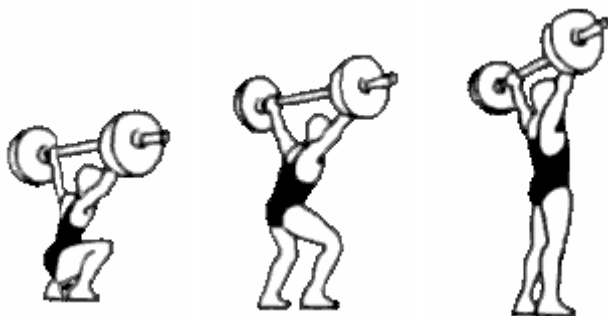




As you go down, leaning back with arms straight, you will discover one of the true keys of lifting: you squat "between your legs." You do not fold and unfold like an accordion, you sink between your legs. Don't just sit and read this: do it! To develop the ability to squat snatch or squat clean hinges on this principle!

Foot stance, hand grip, and most questions are not as relevant as the key point of sitting between your legs. I must admit, I usually just have someone jump two or three times. Note where they land on jumps two and three. Have them look at their heel to toe alignment. "That" is the stance. A touch wider, a touch narrower, it takes a few tries, but I think it is fairly natural.

(Below: The "Overhead Squat" with the bar locked out over the head.)



The best way to fix squat problems is to...squat. I think that alternating the three great variations (back, front and overhead) as well as occasionally adding the "old" lifts like Jefferson or straddle the bar squats or Hip Belt Squats (a special belt with chains is attached to the weight and you simply squat up and down) is the best way to fix problems. Overhead squats teach the arch of the lower back better than any drill, as well as providing a superior back isometric. Front Squats certainly push the stress more to the quads as well as demanding increased flexibility. Back squats clearly help the other two variations by pushing the load higher. So,...if your struggling on one: focus on the others! To Summarize:

- 1 Sit "between your legs"
- 2 Minimize shin movement
- 3 Keep a big chest and big arch in your back
- 4 Everytime you get hurt, not sore, squatting...have someone watch your shins; they shouldn't be coming forward very much at all.
- 5 Done correctly, squats may be the single exercise you need to do for success in sports. Done correctly

Next, the Bulgarians teach the clean, arguing it is simpler than the snatch. This parallels my learning experience, too. Growing up with the Ted William's Sears cement filled barbell, we all cleaned and pressed as young lifters.



1. That Muscle Beach chest position, with the lower back locked in and lats puffed et al, must be maintained throughout the lifts.
2. As you address the bar, the "get set" position, think of your arms as ropes or cables. Keep them long and loose.
3. I like to start with my hands on the bar and my legs "sorta" straight, then squeeze my hips down to the starting position. It helps for me to flex my lats and literally pull my butt down BEFORE I begin the pull.
4. The best advice I know to get the bar going up is to "Push the Floor Away." You need to hold the hips and shoulders in the same angle to the floor for "as long as you can." Physics and physiology will help you finish the lift correctly. Former champ, Russ Knipp argues that all you ever do in pulling, throughout the whole clean or snatch is to focus on pushing the floor down. Think of this first part, the "first pull," as a leg press on a machine. An even better image is to think of pushing your heels all the way through the earth.
5. For new lifters, I stress a drill that sounds crazy, but works well. I teach new lifters to take the bar from the floor to about two inches above the knee as SLOWLY as possible, one inch a second. Why? It teaches the core truth of lifting (and throwing events): proper acceleration. When the bar gets to that spot two inches above the knee: jump! That's it. Snatch or clean, you have just learned the key principles.

After mastering the clean, while continuing doing the squats, it is time to put the bar overhead. In the ideal world, the athlete would have a set of tall boxes two feet lower than shoulder height. The bar would be placed on these high boxes, the athlete would grab the bar, place it on the chest and stand tall. Standard racks work well...very well, in fact...but there is nothing that builds confidence more than a safe place to dump a lift. Pad the floors, if you must, and consider buying bumper plates...those rubber plates that cushion the sound and protect the gym.

Over a period of weeks, the athlete would learn the true military press, the power press (the lifter starts the press with a leg push), the power jerk (after starting the lift with the legs, the athlete "catches" the bar with bent legs when the momentum stops), the split jerk (the athlete dips the bar by bending the knees, drives it over head, then catches the bar by slapping the feet fore and aft) and the behind the neck variations of the same lifts.

Finally, the athlete would slide the hands out to the snatch grip, push the floor away, jump and "snatch" the bar overhead. Throughout this basic training, the athlete would be exposed to variations of the squat (basically the



front and overhead squat) and lots of flexibility work, as well as an orientation to the history of the sport and the rules of the sport.



If you have no interest at all in these lifts...shocking!...here is a simple addition to add to your workout:

Pressouts. I learned this trick from Pacifica Barbell Club coach Dick Notmeyer. Simply, at the end of any overhead lift, including presses, jerks, or push jerks or presses, finish the set with “pressouts.” As you stand tall, with arms locked out overhead, bend your elbows so the bar moves no more than three inches. Continue to do this up to eight times. Now, put the bar down. As simple as this seems, this exercise builds the whole support system. Soon, you may notice the serratus muscles, the “fingers” on the rib cage, becoming a lot more noticeable. As your body tightens to compensate during the pressouts, you are building support strength.

This idea may be used any time. Try sneaking the pressouts into a workout, by the way, it also works in bench presses, but have a good spotter. You’ll see the difference in your ability to support the big weights.

- Now, let’s go from floor to overhead with the bar. Why?
- 1 Great for cardiovascular conditioning...try it and see!
 - 2 True measure of strength
 - 3 Impress your friends!
 - 4 Get functional strength
 - 5 Lift in REAL meets!

I’m telling you, the best single investment you can make is a piece of PVC pipe or an old broomstick. Use the stick to perfect your positions. In addition, the athlete would be exposed to lots of repetitions with broomsticks while learning the basic terms of training and method. You will be amazed at how much sweat this stick can produce!

Dave Turner's Hercules Barbell Club beginners use a simple program for learning and developing the rudiments of strength. Three days a week, the team members go through a ten minute warm up of shoulder "dislocates" with broomsticks, overhead squats with broomsticks, followed by front squats, then a "cardio-like" few minutes of snatches and clean and jerks with the broomsticks. Dave reinforces the terms used in lifting: "Get set," "Push the floor," "Jump," "Dip," and "Down."

Then, Dave’s team does the following simple workout three days a week:

Warm Ups (with the Broomstick)

Snatch: 8 Sets of Doubles (A “Double” is two perfect repetitions)

Clean and Jerk: 8 Sets of Singles (A “Single” is a perfect repetition)

Front Squat: 5 Sets of 5 Repetitions

Press: 5 Sets of 3 Repetitions

If your form is perfect, you add weight the next workout, if not, you stay at this weight. I know, I know, it looks easy on paper. Try it...then, tell me it is easy. Dave is teaching his lifters how to lift during the warm ups! I stole this idea for my discus throwers and our throwers warm up with the basic movements...over and over and over again...of "Stretch-1-2-3." They hear the terms, do the movements and warm up their bodies and their techniques at the same time.

Next, Dave's workout is always the same...with one variation. The athletes all do the same program but they start at different lifts. A typical variation:



Clean and Jerk: 8 Sets of Singles

Front Squat: 5 Sets of 5

Press : 5 Sets of 3

Snatch : 8 Sets of Doubles

So, one day, an athlete might start at the Clean and Jerk and finish with the Snatch, the next workout Front Squat first, the next Press, and the next week begin with the Snatches and finish with the Presses. A little variety is nice...that's all the beginner needs! But, just a little...

The genius of Dave's system is two fold; first, the athletes are preparing from the moment they enter the gym to lift on the platform at a meet. All their training is focused on the two meet lifts: the Snatch and the Clean and Jerk. The Front Squats and the Presses are the "strength" moves.

"Yes" is the answer to what most people then ask: "this isn't what the guys in the NFL/Bulgarian Olympic Team/World Championships do, right?" That's right, they don't do this stuff *now*. But, you can almost be certain that the great ones had a long period of learning the basics.

Performance of the Lifts

One thing Dick Notmeyer, coach of the PBBC, was adamant about, perhaps even obsessed about, was the insistence that his lifters never "power" the weight up but always take the lift to the deep position. He felt that power lifts taught the wrong pull and would fail the lifter on maximum attempts. I think the beginning lifter would be wise to follow this advice. **The more experienced an athlete is as they enter the sport of O lifting the more likely it is for this athlete to find that their power is far beyond their technique. Hang in there for a few months and learn to do it right!**

What's a "Power" Movement?

Simply, it is lifting the bar as high as you can versus "just" high enough to squat under the bar.

So, somebody asked me, "What would you do if you could get in a Time Machine and start all over again?"

1. I would have an excellent coach.
2. I would have excellent facilities.
3. I would have the patience to take the first few years to learn the sport with light



weights and broomsticks.

4. I would have started at age 8.

But, since there is no magic machine to do this...let's start doing it *right* right now!

Some standards I have used with **boys** in the high school setting:

	Snatch	Clean and Jerk
9 th	95 pounds	135 pounds
10 th	115 pounds	175 pounds
11 th	135 pounds	200 pounds
12 th	155 pounds	225 pounds

No, it's not perfect. I don't have weight classes nor do these take into account all the varieties of humanity. But, it's funny...having a standard seemed to make the kids make the standard. Could this be the secret to success?

Summary:

1. As a coach, with beginners, I need to be ruthless in cutting to the core of what works and spend all of our time repping those things that work. A freshman team is not like the NFL, your local church basketball team is not the same as coaching the Lakers, and you shouldn't train a beginner like a member of the Bulgarian National Weightlifting Team!

2. The job of a coach is to think tactically. Part of preparation for competition is to put the athlete in a setting that reflects competition. An endless variation of "if-then" does not prepare the beginning athlete for competition. The novice needs to do "this." One thing. If you follow this advice, you will soon find that your athletes make very few mistakes in competition. Recently, Jimmy Johnson said on Fox Sports that "you always play the guy who makes the fewest mistakes, not the guy with all the talent." There's a gem right there.





Improving on the Basics of Olympic Lifting

This chapter has the two most amazing secrets of not only improving your Olympic lifting, but it also includes the secrets to athletic success. Two inexpensive items...which may already be in your garage...can teach you to use that thing we call your “body” more effectively...instantly. We will also breeze through an issue that I think is overrated, but people love to talk about it. Why? Because most people don’t actually train in a gym, they wave their arms around and talk about training in a gym...



Every four years, the world brings it attention to the Summer Olympics. And, every four years, an announcer states, while trying to comment on the Olympic Lifts, that “the snatch is the fastest movement in sports.” True. A few minutes later, in all the coverage that weight lifting will receive, a massive weight will be cleaned, the lifter will rise, jerk it overhead and be declared “the world’s strongest man.” Again, true. Then, our announcers will return us to yet another five hours of full coverage of the women’s gymnastics warm ups.

Through much of this century, the United States dominated much of the sport of Olympic Lifting. A poor showing at the 1964 Olympics was considered a matter of bad selection of the athletes and poor planning of the Senior Nationals and Olympic Trials was blamed in 1968. But by 1972, the era of American dominance ended, save for Lee James’ wonderful Silver Medal performance in 1976, three decades ago. Olympic Lifting could not survive the scandals of steroids and “uppers” that rocked the sport in the Sixties, the influx of Universal weight machines and the hype of Nautilus machines and the direct competition provided by the birth of Powerlifting.

In the United States, Olympic Lifters find quite a hill to climb. “Gyms” don’t allow weights to be dropped, or chalk used, or, in many cases today, weights to be put overhead. Meets are always a long drive away and poorly sponsored.

So, why do it? Simple: there is no other movement, no other feeling of accomplishment, like lifting a bar from the floor to overhead. There are no racks, no spotters, no special equipment and no other person affecting the bar. It is hard to blame the bar.

The best way to learn the lifts is to get with a coach, other lifters and plan on lifting in a meet. At an Olympic Lifting meet, one can learn more about the sport in three hours than all the articles and videos in the world. The snatch and the clean and jerk lead the lifter to constantly think “how can I do more?”

How can this help you? I am convinced that a year of pure Olympic Lifting would more than repay any athlete for the efforts. Watching films of Russian and Polish high jumpers spending their winter months doing rep after rep of snatches taught me that these lifts carry over into any athletic arena. So, let’s dig deeper:

Warm Up: It's More than Switching on the Radio

Okay, you win. I can't take it anymore. I usually refuse to discuss "warm ups," because, generally, it is just a waste of time for everyone involved...athlete and coach. I have spent far too many hours of my life watching groups of people stretch their hamstrings like ballerinas, then pull that same hamstring when they rev up to a gentle stride...not even a sprint. But, perhaps warm ups do have a value for O lifting ...but, probably more value to the brain than the body. I offer two methods, both have worked well.

Daily Warmup at the Pacifica Barbell Club

After weighing in, general stretching would begin the day. Two interesting stretches that we used at the Pacifica Barbell Club were shoulder dislocates with the “shoulder stretching machine,” a broomstick, and ankle stretches on the “ankle stretching machine,” a step. Sit ups followed stretching. After stretching, we used an unloaded bar to practice snatch and warm up the bottom position. Moving up to 95 pounds, then 115 pounds to repeat the movement and get the bottom position ready. With 135 pounds, Dick would



push the bar down while the lifter sat in the overhead squat position trying to squeeze the knees wider and wider apart. Now, you're ready for anything.

Dave Turner's Hercules Barbell Club Method Dave's beginners use a simple program for learning and developing the rudiments of strength. Three days a week, the team members go through a ten minute warm up of shoulder "dislocates" with broomsticks, overhead squats with broomsticks, followed by front squats, then a "cardio-like" few minutes of snatches and clean and jerks with the broomsticks. Dave reinforces the terms used in lifting: "Get set," "Push the floor," "Jump," "Dip," and "Down."

The issue of flexibility. Forget it! If you want it: squat, dip, straight leg deadlift. If you want more: overhead squat. If you really want more: guess what? Olympic Lift! Don't try to truly increase flexibility during your warm ups...as you continue to train day in and day out on the O lifts your flexibility will quickly improve.

What to focus on during the warm ups?

Whether Olympic lifter, goalie or discus thrower, one constant point that seems to resound throughout the great ones is "work on your weak points." Perhaps that is the reason that athletes used to emphasize general conditioning over specific peaking programs; the athletes were constantly reviewing and restructuring due to a new awareness of a problem area. Some writers

seems to appraise this as a false modesty when the athlete would respond "really, I'm not very good/strong at this or that," yet it seems part of common mentality that you are only as strong as your weakest link.

John Price, a good friend of mine and former Washington Huskie discus thrower, noted that this was the core principle of all the training programs while he was in college. The athletes at Washington learned this from a Swimming Coach who monitored the varsity weight room.

Constant, diligent review of overall trends in one's training, usually from studying training diaries or from a trusted friend's advice, designed the next training program

rather than a glossy magazine in the drug store. **Use your warm up to review and CONQUER your weak points!**

Now, let's get to the keys:

The Three Keys to Success in the Olympic Lifts

My old coach, Dick Notmeyer, felt that there were three keys to success in Olympic Lifting:

1. Leg Strength
2. Pulling Strength
3. Tranquil Mind

I learned an easy method of warm up exercises from this camp I went to in the mid-Seventies. It was "Bulgarian" which meant a lot at the time. In a post at this site, one of the guys learning to power clean struggled with his flexibility and this little warmup really helped me.

1. Wrist rolling. Just stand and make your fists into balls and "roll" them around. Push your knuckles into any place that feels stiff.
2. Behind the neck Squat Press. Take a really, really light bar, squat and do behind the neck presses. Loosens up everything.
3. Good mornings with stomach sucked in. I don't know why this is special, but it feels good.
4. Slow, precise classic lifts. I like to do first pulls at about one inch a second in the first pull then jump down into the bottom position and just hold it.
5. Easy, "yoga" positions. I just put my heels together in the 'butterfly' and stretch my groin.

A Quick note on the third one: The Tranquil Mind

Dick Notmeyer believed that a relaxed athlete, a composed athlete, competed better than an overcharged, raging bull. Humor helps, preparation helps, fun helps, packing your gear with you on a plane helps, getting to a meet early helps, anything that makes the athlete able to lift the correct way at the correct time is the key. Here is one way to think of this "I will limit the number of warmups before going on the platform and know that the weeks of preparation will pay off." The easiest way to be "tranquil?" Prepare.

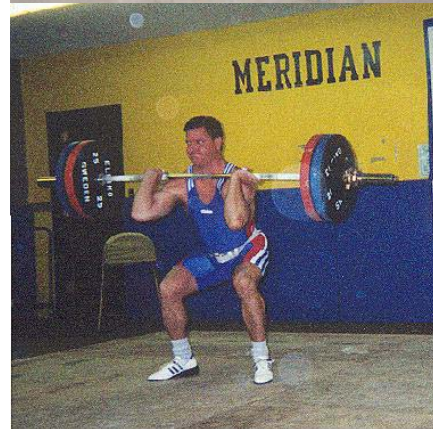
We will devote an entire chapter to the key concept of "Preparing the Tranquil Mind."

Leg Strength...the Next Big Key

Squat...any other questions? Let me save you the follow up question, "how do you improve it," by giving you the secret...the sawhorse! Sure, you can do thousands and thousands of Back Squats and Front Squats and all the variations, but I always encourage people to look for the "sticking point," the point where you slow or stall when you stand up with a weight...then, aggressively fix that weak spot!

Do you need to buy a fancy iron welded, pulley laden, size consuming weight rack? No! I strongly recommend going over to the local hardware store and buying an inexpensive set of saw horses. I bought the fancy kind that adjust up and down a little, but, even then, it wasn't much of an outlay of funds. I'm telling you from the heart: the local hardware store is the first place you need to go when outfitting a gym! I set up a wood platform, fancy bounce pads and a bunch of nice odds and ends to hang my equipment up all for about thirty dollars. Go cheap!

One quick point: I know that there are thousands of resources available for the reader...both in paper and on-line...about squatting. There are a hundred variations of the basic squat and all of them help. This book, however, is dedicated to those who are either too cheap (like me) or too tired of failure. For years, I had people tell me that "the answer to all questions is squats," yet I squatted all the time and never improved. A few bucks at a hardware store and a few weeks of what I am about to recommend gave me record breaking legs at one-tenth the effort of others!



Some "Rack" Work Ideas

Rack work, Functional Isometric Contraction, "Bottom Position" work, "Quarter Squats" and a bunch of other variations are a classic way to train yourself to get through a "sticking point." You can, however, quickly burn out. So, after you get excited about fixing your weak spots with some heavy, isolation work, take a moment to "think" through some of lessons I have learned.

Before reading this, pop over to <http://danjohn.org/ds.html> and read my interviews with Dick Smith, master of Functional Isometric Contractions. Dick was the one who really understood the rack work, in fact, to quote Dick "Hoffman (Bob Hoffman wrote a series of books about isometrics) NEVER understood the rack work." For example, Dick emphasized that you simply clear the bottom pin in rack work, you don't slam it into another pin to increase the load. The perfect weight is one that ALL YOU CAN DO is clear the weight off the rack and hold it for all you got.

Second, Dick was very clear that one quickly overtrains in the rack...but, at the same time, doesn't notice this overtraining at all. I found the same thing in 1991. I went on a serious imitation of Bill March's program (one of the original "experimenters" in Isometrics) and got very strong, then pulled my right trap. In fact, my friend, Paul Northway, commented ..."God, you jerked 315 off the rack without ANY warmups." I got seriously strong and badly overtrained mixing programs.

Remember, this stuff works!!!

Later, after talking with Dick Smith, I began my Deadstop Front Squat program to cure my sticking point in the Front Squat. When the bar was 34 inches off the ground...we measured...I stalled out. Partially, it was my technique...I needed to learn to squeeze up through this position rather than relaxing my thighs. But, it was also the position that my levers...in my legs...were at their most disadvantageous position. In other words, I got stuck!

In just a few weeks, I fixed it. Here were my observations:

1. Six singles MAX! In fact, I think it might be less now... after a couple of warm ups, maybe only two or three total efforts. (Dick wouldn't agree with this, but I don't just clear the bottom position, I stand right up, so the weight would actually be less)
2. I like two sets of five with 50% of the estimated max in the full motion before I start doing the deadstops. You know, 165 x 5 x 5 in the front squat to get ready, for example, if you are using 330. I tried doing Deadstop Front Squats cold (no warmups at all) and it works, but I also noticed that my hips (the psoas) killed me the next few days. Of course, I am a geezer, so you young bucks might not need it.
3. I would agree with some who argue that one day a week is good and you could do three if only doing one move in the rack. This is going to be an experiment of one...what works for you and your weak points. I did three days a week for about two weeks then started hating lifting (again) and stopped improving. Two at the most would work for me,

I think.

4. Be sure to be honest about your weak point. I had Dave Turner look at my Clean recovery, not my front squat. Get the point where you slow or noticeably "gear change." It turned out that my sticking point was 34 inches off the ground. So, I set the saw horses at 34 inches, put the bar on top of the two of them and squatted away!

So, the best thing I ever did for my Front Squat strength...a basic indicator of total leg strength...was to purchase an inexpensive set of sawhorses (I got them adjustable, but it may or may not matter), put the bar across the two of them, pack on a lot of plates and try to stop from the "Dead Stop" bottom position. It worked wonders for me! Now, what if that doesn't work? Well...

What can I do to "stand up" easier in my heavy cleans?

It is a difficult thing for the Olympic lifter since the demise of the press to NOT have great legs. Well, I was/am one of them. As a junior in college, I lifted in a meet and needed 165/363 pounds to win. Well, I cleaned it, bounced up and jerked it for three white lights. Now the interesting thing is that my lifetime best front squat was 365. Dick Notmeyer had a mantra: "If you can front squat it for three, you can clean and jerk it." Later, at the Utah Summer Games, in 1991, I cleaned 182.5/402 stood up and lost the jerk behind. Again, my best front squat was 405.

So, why am I boring everyone with a history lesson? Simply, the same levers that allowed me to throw the discus over 190 as a Senior in college kept me from being a squatting machine! Here are a few ideas for those of us in the crappy squat category:

1. Become an expert in "catching the bounce." That wonderful stretch-reflex that leaps you out of the deep position CAN be trained. Dick used a drill we called "Barski Cleans." With straps lock onto the bar, stand up, lean back a little so your shoulders get pulled into a proper position, now dip forward to just below your knees, squat clean it and stand right up. These would be called Squat Cleans from the Romanian Deadlift today, but you will find them very helpful in teaching you to time your lift so your leg problems are not a problem.
2. Try front squatting at the start of your workout. It took me a few weeks to get used to doing other stuff after front squats (jerks, especially, but snatches can be a problem, too.) Also, try front squatting at the start of EVERY workout for a week or two. Nothing crazy, maybe two sets of two, with around 80%, then a single at some higher weight. Some of us need the "Nervous System Stimulation." I just invented that, but it seems to help. The way to learn a language is to immerse yourself into it, perhaps you need to immerse yourself in your legs.
3. I found track season really helped my front squat. Why? I would really back off on the O lifts and do more bodybuilding and stairs/hills. When the season ended, a week or two later my legs would be ten or twenty pounds stronger. Maybe a general conditioning course would help. Joe Mills used to recommend fast deadlifts and repetition squats to turn problems around. With Dick Notmeyer, we would do all kinds of "contests." We had a bench 225 for reps board, squat bodyweight for reps contest, sit up contests, and all kinds of fun, but productive

stuff.

4. Finally, you may just have to accept that you are going to have weaknesses. When I did the Soviet Squat routine and got my front squat to 405, my jerk form went out the window. When I got my jerk back around, my bottom position tightened up. I think the secret lies in something Coach Ralph Maughan told me: “Turn your weaknesses into your strengths.” Of course, when you do that: you find new weaknesses!

The Key to Pulling Strength: the Bow and Arrow

In 1977, Skyline College welcomed Wolfgang Linkman as a coach. His knowledge of English was not the best, but his wealth of information on track and field was amazing!

As Eric Seubert and I tried to understand Linkman’s ideas we soon realized that the **KEY** to throwing was the idea of “SSSSSHH KU!”

Hmmm? Well, Wolfgang couldn’t explain it in English, but with his body and actions, he demonstrated that great distances come when you pull on a muscle, then it pops back. It would later be called “prestretch” by some, but I still like the original insight...that the athlete must strive for a “Bow and Arrow” every time they attempt to master a sport.

For the shot putter, this is easy: the throwing wrist to the elbow is the arrow, and the body is the bow:

For the discus thrower, it is important to get the chest to the “front” then SSSSSSH KU!

*But I **never** understood the role of the Bow and Arrow in the weight room until recently!*
Oh, Sure...

For the Bench Press, this is obvious, but how about the O lifts?

Recently, in Denis Reno’s weightlifting Newsletter, he noted that the Bulgarians are taught to focus the entire pull **on the heels**. One training session later, the teachings of Linkman and the Bulgarian training ideas made perfect sense!

The “arrow” of the Olympic lifts is a straight line pointing up from the heels. Yes, the **heels**...if you ever let your bodyweight stay on your toes in the quick lifts, you better have a light weight on the bar because you are not going to make the lift!

(In the picture on the right, Nick’s toes on are small lifting plates...Dan is forcing him to jut his chin out AND push his butt back...The Bow!)



The "Bow?"

First, I have to insist you try focusing on the heels only style...it works. A good drill for teaching this method is to put your toes on a piece of wood or two ten pound plates and do your regular workout. I can snatch and clean off of a 2 x 4 now with just a minimal jump back.

To get the Bow, you have to do two things that have become obvious if you have followed O lifting the past few years.

One: you have to lift with the head up and the jaw "jutting" forward. I like my athletes to make "raptor" noises to teach him to hold that head forward...this will naturally keep the shoulders well over the bar. The jaw is one of the tips of the bow.

Two: you have to really stress the "Romanian Deadlift" Position.

The "bottom of the tail bone" (or you can use another anatomical hint) is the other end of the bow. The farther you can stretch out the two ends of the bow, the faster that arrow is going to shoot up!

How to Train This?

1. Try lifting with your toes on a board or plates...just try it!

At first, this is going to seem odd. But, if you had pull a train towards you hand over hand with a rope laying on your back, would you dig in your heels? If you say "yes," you probably will understand why you pull on your heels.

2. Try this sequence...snatch or clean

Stand tall with the bar in the snatch or clean grip. Lower the bar by pushing your butt back...don't lower the bar, push your butt back as far as you can. When you can't go any lower, snatch or clean the bar from this position. With the bar snatched or cleaned, lower the bar in stages until you just touch the floor...barely...and snatch or clean it again.

This is one rep! Rest and Repeat!

With this sequence, you will find that you naturally stay on your heels...if you don't, you will fall flat on your face!



Strive to find the "Bow and Arrow" in all your sports. One little hint: in the weightroom, we live on our heels, in athletics, we live on our toes. Keep looking for opportunities to add the Bow to your sport!



Aaron Hall on the "Bow and Arrow"

Sgt. Aaron Hall is a frequent guest at my gym. He jumps out of helicopters and saves lives for a living...so, we love having us train with us when he can fit it into his busy schedule.

We start going into his Romanian Deadlift/Snatch/Overhead Squat drill with a vengeance. I really like this drill. I can't do it to save my life, but I really like the drill. If you are 72 inches tall or taller get down low enough to grip the bar just inside the collars. Now stand up with it however you wish. Now lower the bar just below the kneecaps. To lower the bar you slide it down your thighs while pushing your ass back with as little knee bend as possible. It's like doing a good morning with the weight in dead lift position instead of across the shoulders. When the bar reaches the area just below your knees your hamstrings should feel really tight and your whole body feels like it's in a position it really shouldn't be in. If everything is as it should be your back should be very flat, your butt well behind your ankles, and your chin jutting forward as if you are trying to touch the opposite wall.

Next, and as quickly as possible, try to touch your chin to the ceiling. What you will find is that the bar will shoot up and you will be in a semi standing position. Don't straighten out your knees! Keep them bent, it's very important. Once the bar has reached maximum height, which is around chest to abdominal level, pull yourself down below it into the bottom position of the overhead squat. Now if you are like me you probably power snatched the thing. That's ok; just add an overhead squat at the end. Then drop the bar and start over.

Points to remember are to push your butt as far back as possible and to actively pull the bar towards you as you go down so it slides down your thighs. This was something I was having trouble getting. However, thanks to Dan's gentle coaching methods (he was standing over me with a rake handle held high in a manner befitting a Feudal Shogun from ancient Japan) I have fixed this problem. No, he never hit me with the stick, although I made damn sure I didn't give him a reason to, and somewhere Sister Nicholas was smiling.

Mike Rosenberg on the "Romanian Deadlift" (The RDL)

Mike is a good friend of mine from Indiana. Mike leaped into Olympic Lifting, Highland Games and track and field a few years ago and has some brilliant insights into training.

Dan Sterba, Steph, Coach Pain, Dan and I retired to the lifting Salon to undertake the RDL. The way Dan explains how to do it and the manner in which you see most others do it are completely different animals. Most lifters do something along the lines of a limited range stiff legged dead lift (SLDL) instead of an RDL. The RDL is not a ballistic movement and in my opinion requires a fair amount of focus when doing them.

- 1) **If possible start from blocks or on the pins outside of a power rack. This curbs the desire to mimic the SLDL.**
- 2) **Utilize a snatch grip.**
- 3) **Shins should be vertical to your feet the whole time. (Don't bend your ankle joint at all!)**
- 4) **Unlock your knees – just a little.**
- 5) **Slide the bar along your thighs. Keep contact.**
- 6) **Your weight should ALWAYS be on your heels. (lift your toes to get the feel)**
- 7) **Move the bar down by pushing your bum back as far as it can go.**
- 8) **Simultaneously, as you push your bum back, try to place your chin on the wall in front**



of you. Really work to jut your chin out there.

- 9) But moving your bum back and your chin forward, lower the bar to your patellar tendon and then stand up.**

If you are doing these right, you should attain the feeling that your hamstrings want to pop off the back of your legs. I highly recommend doing these for the first time with an empty bar. Trust me, it is enough weight to tie up your hammies. If you “feel it” in your lower back, you are either moving your knee or ankle joints too much and not your hips. You should only be moving your hips, your ankles should be fixed and even though your knees are unlocked, you should not be moving the ankle joint. Again, if you feel an “X” forming across your hamstrings and they want to pop off the back of your legs. You are doing this correctly.

Summary

1. Success in anything in life usually revolves around mastering the basics. Olympic Lifting is no different and the three basics are mastering the emotions (the Tranquil Mind), blasting through your sticking points (Leg Strength) and properly "shooting" the bar up (Pulling Power). You *might* have some success with a slight weakness in any of these three areas, but I know you can't ignore two weaknesses.

2. With an inexpensive set of sawhorses and a piece of wood to put your toes on, you can be well on your way to another level as a lifter and athlete.



Up the Mountain to Success

You know, we all talk about the issues raised in this chapter...but few go the next step up the mountain and implement these ideas. We start with the base, nutrition and work out way up through the need for “planned recovery,” learning from our experiences and, ultimately, using these lessons from our past to successfully chart our future. Yes, it’s simple, but not easy...

In the last chapter, we discussed Dick Notmeyer's concept of the "Tranquil Mind." Here, we will begin to kick around some of the ideas...some of the practical steps...that lead to this state. Trust me, having your athletic shoes in your carry on bag will keep you calmer when the airlines have lost the rest of your luggage!

My friend, Jim Markosian, always makes fun of me when I talk because I always take so long getting to the point. Okay, I'll stop doing that. Here is the point: the wise coach...and athlete...will slowly march up the ladder of success. Be sure to have fully benefited from each step before going up to the next rung on the ladder. Let me offer some practical ideas.

The Base Camp, Nutrition

There are literally thousands of books about nutrition and none of them seem to agree about anything. For most athletes, they "know" what to eat, then choose to eat something fun. So, let's just focus on the simple, basic steps that most people will agree with concerning diet issues and engage our brains in a bit of thinking about long term success in sports.

1. With the novice, I always talk about the basics of good nutrition. Eliminate soft drinks (start pushing water as the main beverage from the beginning), candy and crap foods, and really emphasize the importance of breakfast.
2. Although this may sound complicated, I would then move into discussing foods that don't "agree" with the athlete. Here is a simple list:
 - 1 If you ask the Lung Association, who has a long history with battling allergies, they will answer you simply: "**Peanut, fish, egg, milk, wheat and soy** cause most food allergies." Indeed, in the early 1980's, a popular muscle mag published an article that simply stated that 90% of Americans are allergic to wheat or milk.
 - 2 "Dr. Elson Haas notes in an interview with "Mind and Muscle Power" that the least allergic foods are: **rice, pears, lamb, kale, salmon (and other deep sea fish, like halibut and sole) trout, turkey, rabbit, sweet potatoes, and honey.** He goes on to recommend **cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli, apricots, beets, squashes, olives, olive oil, cranberries, herbal teas and tapioca.**"

I have always used acne as an indicator that one of my teenage athletes is struggling with a particular food issue and as a sign of overtraining. This doesn't need to be too difficult, but I constantly meet adults who have great clarity about which foods make them gassy, bloated or actually ill. You don't want to find out you are allergic to shellfish the morning of a competition!

3. You may also want to slowly encourage your athletes to use foods as a supplement. Recently, at a workshop, one of the presenters gave a list of foods for muscle building:

The Best of the Best List

Eggs

Almonds

Salmon

Yogurt

Beef

Olive oil

Water

Next of the Best:

Oatmeal (the "real" kind)

Blueberries

Apples

I have had great success on the playing field when increasing the amount my athletes consume these foods. Once I see an athlete carrying a baggie full of almonds and a couple of hard boiled eggs, I know I'm coaching a state champ.

4. Finally, real supplements. I choose a few for my athletes, but I only discuss them long after they swear off soft drinks, candy and all the rest and only after they convince me that they always have two full meals and a snack before an afternoon training session. I like three: **fish oil capsules, a magnesium tablet, and a potassium tablet.** So, you may ask, when do we start the real stuff? Like what? Creatine? Don't waste a nickel on any supplements until you exhaust the basic steps noted above...cut out the crap, eliminate troublesome foods, and eat the "Superfoods." You may never need anything else!

5. Finally, "Organize your eating" would be my next recommendation. I like following diet "outlines," a *suggested* eating list. A few years ago, I had a young female thrower ask me about losing "weight." I tried to convince her that she was fine (I wanted to tell her that statistically you look the best you will ever look before your first diet...its all downhill after that, but I shut up), so I offered her a very generic diet where you eat:

Breakfast

Eggs

Oatmeal

Apple

Snack

Protein Shake

Lunch

Chicken Breasts

Salad

Apple

Snack

Cheese

Apple

Dinner

Meat

Salad

The serving sizes were normal (whatever that means) and we had the calories around 1500 a day. She looked at it and said: "I could never eat that much!!!" Yet, her diet at the time...including two sodas and two candy bars a day...had her eating more calories each day than this modest proposal!

Oh, and why all the apples? I work with students and people who work in offices. You can't beat the apple for convenience and nutrition. You don't have to open, peel, or prepare...shine and eat!

The First Ascent, Recovery

I wrote this to answer a simple question a few years ago and I still am amazed how I typed this in about five minutes...yet, it honestly has some value for a raw beginner and an Olympian.

The Ten Commandments of Recovery

Sleep! You probably won't even consider this one, but it is the single best weight loss tool, muscle gain tool, training tool, life tool, I have ever encountered. A few years ago, I did a simple experiment with sleep: I tried to sleep 12 hours every night for a week. My energy skyrocketed, but...amazingly...I dropped eleven pounds that week on the bathroom scale. No change in diet, no change in exercise, yet the scale noted eleven pounds. It was certainly obvious in my face and waist. It is free, try it! The Cuban lifters sleep nine hours every night, PLUS a three hour nap! Turn off the TV and go to bed!

The body is one piece! Don't think you have an upper body and a lower body. Stick a fork in someone's thigh while they are benching and it will stop the lift, even though some think that bench presses are for the upper body. If you play three hours of pickup basketball games, it will hurt your training. If you slam tequila shooters with the cute girl just back from the Mexico trip, it will hurt your training. Staying up all night with sick children will hurt your training. An infected toe will hurt your training. You are one magnificent piece, keep that in mind. The first line of defense against injury and overtraining is monitoring your life as well as your training.

Don't think about recovery and you won't! Hoping that you recover will not help you recover. Somewhere, in your calendar or training notebook, you have to make some clear decisions to focus on recovery. O lifting three days a week can exhaust the human body, but you can easily recover during the other four days off. You can recover unless you spend the other four days snowboarding, hauling rocks or playing six hours a day of basketball. I fully believe in "active rest," adding recreational activities to help the mind and body heal, but you need to be very moderate in your non-lifting energy wasting movements. You also need to let the mind heal and recover. The first sign of exhaustion is the lack of enthusiasm to train with weights.

Program and Plan! At some level, know what you are going to do in the gym each day. True, you can overplan, but basically have some idea why you are there. I like to focus on two things in each workout, this week and the next meet. Simply, each week, I try to be sure to include a solid pulling workout, a pushing workout, a squat workout and a technical workout. I might do each movement every workout, but somewhere in the week, I like to make sure I "worked hard" on each phase of the O lifts. Depending on how close or far my next O lifting meet is on the horizon determines the reps, sets or weights. That is a fairly simple long-term plan, but it seems to work. I often take an "easy" week, too, but I tend to cover the four elements in these weeks. I keep my "eye" on the long-term each workout. I remember watching new lifters back in college show up to the HPER gym with the newest magazine article that had them do multiple sets of multiple reps with multiple exercises for each tiny bodypart. Having no idea of even the rudiments of lifting, they would toil endlessly moving from tiny weight to tiny weight. True, they had a program, but no real plan! Make sure you keep each workout in full view of your long and short-term goals.

Eat your protein. Eat your fats. The greatest mistake of my life was listening to the high carb nonsense of the Seventies and Eighties. It is nearly impossible to recover, not to

mention grow and improve, on a high carb diet. You need protein and fat to recover, grow and improve. Ignoring this advice will be very detrimental to your lifting career. Don't make my mistake! The Bulgarians are reported to get half their calories from fat, the Romanians discovered that ultra-high protein diets increased muscle mass (no surprise) and lifting ability. I favor the The Meat, Leaves and Berries Diet , but there are many other variations.

Minerals: Biggest Bang for the Buck I was sitting with Brian Oldfield, former World Record Holder in the shot put, at discus camp and he leaned over and told me: "None of these guys will listen, but they should be taking minerals." Brian was tired of throwers asking about the newest fad in nutrition, mostly this or that magazine's magic protein, and gave me the secret to recovery: minerals. "They are the biggest bang for the buck." Magnesium and Potassium are my two secret weapons. Mg is the best single nutrient I can think of, see the Eades' book, "Protein Power Lifespan Program" for more information. K is great, too, as any low carb dieter will tell you. Those two supplements are start to a better recovery.

Hot tubs and cold showers Myth or not, I don't know, but the combination of hot tubs and icy showers is the best combination I have ever read about or practiced for recovery. The Bulgarians explained the benefits of both in the Seventies and I find the combination wonderful for joint recovery as well as a chance to simply "chill." Cold showers have even been touted as a fat loss tool, so maybe you get an extra boost for doing them. I am convinced of this combinations ability to help recovery.

Ab work: Okay, how does working more help recovery? In the area of abdominal work, it seems to help the O lifter. The Chinese lifters consider the abs a "second" backbone, hence stronger abs=stronger torso=bigger lifts. I like those ten dollar "ab wheels" as an ab workout, although sit ups and one arm work seem to help, too. If I have to explain how to do ab work, then...maybe you REALLY need to try another sport.

Splurge I bought a hot tub a couple of years ago. I have a friend who gets a monthly sports massage. A visit to a chiropractor might help some lifters...a vacation might help others. That is what splurge means: spend some money or time providing recovery. I thought of this while sitting in my hot tub watching the stars.

Pay attention to who you listen to: Friends, family and training partners will often be your first line of noticing your overtraining. Also, pay attention to people you respect. If you trust somebody enough to follow their program, trust them when they tell you to ease off OR train harder! Discernment is a key "virtue" in long-term success.

Remember why you don't listen to some people. Once you decide on a route to take in training, be careful of listening to every "whisper in the wind." Every time I lift at a spa, some gym expert comes over to discuss why front squats are bad, or some other moronic thing I honestly don't have time to debate. "Dude, will creatine help my biceps?" I don't know, I don't care, honestly, I don't. Magazines in the muscle field are one step from porn and cater to the fears and insecurities of adolescent boys. When you want into a nutrition

store looking to buy "Horny Goat Weed" or some other "hot" supplement, remember "why you don't listen to some people."

All right then...is there an order to this list? Sure...even if you are a raw beginner, you should be extremely careful about your sleep. Each, however, is worth considering...daily. Basically, whenever you train, take a moment to look down the list and make sure you are following all ten!!!

Recovery: The Next Generation!

Recently, at a workshop, Doctor Lonnie Lowry noted that we need to learn to "Quantify" recovery. Simply, we need a daily reminder...a daily checklist...to make sure we are balanced in our fitness goals.

Since this workshop, I have been having my athletes use a simple ten point scale: **Nutrition:** Two points for a good breakfast, one point for two snacks, one point for two additional meals...for a total of four points. (Breakfast, snack, lunch, snack, dinner is a four point day.) I think "good" choices...the superfoods...are the key, but I will accept just about anything from an athlete who is just learning that success is more than just dinner and soft drinks each day.

Sleep: 8 hours is two points. More is three, less is one or none.

Relationships: Things were good today: one point. Fights, stress, break ups...none, maybe even negative points.

"Alone" time: If the athlete had some time during the day to collect their thoughts and relax without any time or work or school issues...you get a point. You need to figure 15 minutes at least...but that is not on the internet, phone, or a car, either!

Play time: If the athlete found some time in his or her day to simply laugh and enjoy themselves in the company of others...not with a television on nor a phone nor the internet...you get a point. Table conversation is the best, followed by old fashioned games.

Tally this up each day. You should strive for "tens" across the board. If you increase your training load from walking to full-time Olympic lifting, you need to really look at these five areas. Lowry also recommended comparing and contrast your training profile to your recovery profile.

For an athlete doing one thing, you could have a chart from one to ten. Even if you do nothing, be sure to consider that a three or four point day (out of ten). An exhausting workout would be a ten and you can gradually get a feel for workouts from a "four" to a "ten."

Athletes doing two things, for example, sports training and general conditioning, you should break each workout into five point clusters. Although you may have a sports workout of an easy nature, tactical preparation or game planning, an exhausting workout, perhaps some of the crossfit.com's Workout of the Days, would tally up to an eight or nine day. "Practice" might be easy, but your conditioning was very hard.

So, for the single sport athlete...an Olympic Lifter...a day's breakdown might look like this:

Nutrition: 4 *Made my snacks the night before...good idea*
 Sleep: 2 *Watched some T.V., up by 6:00*
 Relationships: 1 *Nice talk with an old friend today*
 Alone Time: 0 *Never a moment to myself*
 Play: 1 *Whipped everybody in Stratego*
Recovery Total: 8
Workout Level: 9 *Another day of nailing big Cleans after Max Front Squats...sore!*

This athlete is in a recovery “deficit,” with a “nine” workout, but only an “eight” recovery. Maybe not a big deal, but if you do this for three days or longer, you might find those nagging injuries and other issues showing up. Some argue that it might take up to two months to fully deal with overtraining! Maybe a little foresight early might save some issues later.

For the athlete who has an athletic practice AND a conditioning practice (or whatever you may call it), the workouts tallied together:

Nutrition: 2 *No time for breakfast today...made up for it all day.*
 Sleep: 3 *Slept in...still a little tired*
 Relationships: 0 *Really tired of my significant other's family*
 Alone Time: 0 *Not really*
 Play: 1 *Does watching T.V. count?*
Recovery Total: 6
Practice 4 *Not the toughest ever, but I was off my game*
Workout 5 *Crossfit WOD just about killed me.*

This athlete is in trouble. A minus three deficit is obviously going to take its toll...and soon!

Maybe this exact formula won't work for you, but try to “quantify” recovery and I can guarantee you will feel better and enjoy athletic success much faster.

Base Camp Two, or, “Try to only make the same mistakes once!”

Mining Your Journal

That's right...“mining,” like a miner in a tunnel. You need to dig out those treasures from your own experiences!

About a decade ago, I worked with a young man, let's call him “Ed,” who had all the physical tools, listened to everything I said, worked hard in my presence, and went home. But, he couldn't get himself to follow my most important commandment: Keep a journal. The second year I worked with him, I also found out that he did

From the Ground Up

“One of Tommy Kono's more famous sayings is “less is more.” Due to this schedule change I'm gonna find out. Mike Huszka said a few years back that if he could power snatch 70 kg for a triple in training that he could start in the snatch with full confidence with 90 kg. The trick as a master is to find out how much work gets a decent result without turning you into a pile of rubble in very short order. You can't train if you're hurt...so unless you have an unfulfilled death wish, it makes much more sense to train moderately than to beat yourself up continually. Results are good and you feel a whole lot better. As a master that's supposedly what I'm after anyway. So, enough of my theories...I hope that you are able to train and that things are well with you.”
From Fred Lowe's post on Go Heavy. Fred is one of USA's finest lifters ever...and continues to amaze people as a master.

absolutely nothing on weekends, virtually nothing all summer, and lumped over any extended break.

Any strength and power athlete who can't train alone is going to fail. Sometime, sooner or later, you need to stand alone. I took an idea from the Soviet track coaches and quit going to meets with my athletes, when appropriate. Why? Well, they had to deal with their own problems. Forgot your thrower's shoes? Deal with it. Mean judges? Deal with it. Bad conditions? Deal with it. My wife, Tiffini, still thinks it is funny that I get telephone calls on mornings throughout May that start with: "Dan, I won the State Championship!" and usually has the follow up line: "Have you had coffee yet?" I'm often in bed when our newest member of the State Championship club calls.

Ed never won a state championship. With a couple of years of hindsight, I am now convinced that he gave it away by missing the most important tool in the athlete's toolbox...the training journal. His journal would have helped him with the single most important key to athletic success:

Try to **only** make the same mistakes over and over again a couple of times.

What? Simply, we tend to repeat our errors. We want to be successful, so we increase our volume and intensity to make the big leap, then find ourselves hurt, injured, and sick. Of course, a week or so after the flu, we hit our season's best mark. Next year, we do it again...train too hard, get hurt, then improve. By the third year,...well, now it is "fool me twice, shame on me."

Without a journal, Ed relied solely on others to discover his path to success. He didn't understand one of the great keys to athletic success: Mining your Journal. Your training journal is goldmine of information...if you take the time, daily, to record your workouts, your attitudes and your life in general. Years later, you can sift through this material to discover what makes YOU tick!

Sometimes, the answers aren't apparent. For example, in 1991, I was coaching at the Upper Limit Gym here in Utah. So, I had access to great facilities, lots of training partners and great enthusiasm about the strength sports. I began to really push my Back Squat poundage. There were weeks when my squat would go up by twenty and thirty pounds as I was shamed into lifting more by excellent powerlifters. I topped out at 605 for three reps...I remember realizing that the weight was bending my ribs...and I also noticed something else.

This increase in squatting weight did not add one foot to my discus throw. I threw 190 at Utah State and never went over 405 in the squat, yet 605 got me to 181. Two years later, talking with John Powell (twice bronze medalist in the discus at the Olympics), he told me that he had quit squatting heavy years before he began to really "bomb" the discus. He felt that heavy squatting "didn't feel good," so why do it?

That made no sense to me at all. I was stronger, so I should throw farther. Then, in 1994, after not squatting heavy for three years, mostly rapid squats up to sets of eight and lots of hill sprints, I dropped a 184 throw. I weighed less, my waist was smaller, I felt better...I threw farther.

So, how do I “mine my journal?” I went back to 1991 and I looked at the videos of my throws. I compared them to 1994. I looked “healthier,” but it was hard to see any other difference. Then, I thought about the hill sprints. In 1994, my finish was smoother somehow, I held together better. Could all the hill sprints have been the key, or the dropping of heavy squats?

You know, I don’t really know the answer, but my journal entries found no injuries in 1994, lots of energy, lots of inside jokes and fun with the group. 1991’s entries talk about buying ankle wraps, knee wraps, wrist wraps, and biweekly visits to the chiropractor. Clearly, increasing the load with my squatting got me hurt with little pay off.

Maybe, it was simply what I thought about a month ago: heavy squatting makes your hips and legs strong...but the body is one piece. When you throw, you snap off your whole leg and you are only as strong as...your ankle. If you cave at your ankle, you lose your finish. Hill sprints seem to be an ankle/calf builder with no peer.

As John Price reminds me often of the only key in athletic success: you are only as strong as your weakest link. For me, and probably everyone, the goal should be to strive to bring your weak points up to a point that they become your strong points!

So, we have seen the first technique in Mining Your Journal: **Reviewing one season in the light of another.** Big deal, everybody does it...or do we? How often have you cracked open your old journals and looked at them carefully? I would argue doing this at least twice a year. The off season is obviously a time to harvest the knowledge you earned and forgot in the past. I think the next best time is just before peaking. What gems have you forgotten, what mistakes are you about to repeat?

My favorite in-season use of the journal is the “**Countback.**” I take the four weeks prior to a “hot” performance...a day where nothing goes wrong or you just are in the groove...and look at the month.

Several years ago, I began doing heavy back squats and power snatches each and every workout and tossed in heavy, heavy jerks twice a week. One weekend, I had an Olympic Lifting meet in the morning and a track meet in the afternoon. I had the opportunity to do this two weekends in a row.

A week later, I tossed 181’7” in a left handers wind, put the shot 50’9” and snatched 314 (clean and jerked 358, cleaned 402 and missed the jerk) in a three day period. Then, I went into a six month tailspin of injury upon injury.

What did I learn? Well, I thrived on Power Snatches! But, the heavy jerks and heavy

squats all led to injuries. It would take a couple years to really mine this season!

Another tool for mining your journal is to **Look for insights...that you may need to rekindle.**

Jeff Armstrong came over one weekend and I noted that he needed to ease off on his 56 pound weight tosses as he seemed to have a Speed Barrier. He was aware of the Soviet Drill, from my book, "The Contrarian Approach to the Discus Throw." For those of you who missed it:

"Yes, I know...no more Soviets, but the drill is called "the Soviet Drill." I learned about this drill years ago as a way to break through the "speed barrier." After marking the best throw, step off about 15 feet for most high school athletes...some 20-25 feet...back towards the ring and put a large marker there. Cones work great, towels and bags are fine. If you have many throwers, you might have a little colony out there.

The Soviet Drill is simply a series of twenty full throws trying to just hit the marker *as easily as you can!* Many athletes simply can't do this! Yet, once they get the hang of throwing with **less**, they soon find that that they can easily surpass their previous one throw mark, but using good technique and rhythm. Also, this drill comes in handy when the pressure is on to qualify for the finals at a meet."

Jeff, like most strength athletes **couldn't** grasp how easing off could help you throw farther. Then, I asked him: "Do you max squat every day?" As the words came out of my mouth, I thought to myself, "you know, you should practice what you preach!" I have a journal entry where this concept whacked me on the head again:

November 7, 2000

Great trip to Las Vegas and Phoenix. Really enjoyed watching ASU come back from 35-6, only to lose in double overtime. My Cardinals defeated the over-inflated Redskins, as well.

While at the Orleans, I got in a nice workout with two fifty-pound dumbbells. I did about an hour of clean and press, one arm snatches, and one arm presses. Last night, after getting off the plane, I did a nice workout of Power Snatches (six singles with 155), Power Clean and Push Jerk (six singles with 195), then some real snappy Clean Pulls and Romanian Deadlift Clean Pulls (a bunch with 235). This is the kind of workout that seems to give me a lot of long term benefit. When I drop back to "one lift a day" style of training, it really helps to have this volume with snappy, fast workouts in my quiver.

I had a nice talk with John Powell on this trip. We ate three meals together and went bowling for a couple of hours. We both agreed that one of the real secrets to increasing your throwing distance and your lifting maxs is to push your 60-80% lifts/throws up. In throwing, you try to see how easy you can toss 80% of your best. In lifting, you try to dominate those lighter weights. If you have the patience to back off, you can shoot ahead later.

This doesn't mean what most people think. We have a saying, "I said it was simple, not easy." It is simple to do, but not easy. For me to back off, I have to have something to back off from!!! Too many guys don't put the heavy training in early, so they can back off later. I wouldn't consider this method of training until you at least snatch bodyweight. These fast snappy workouts should still have some nice weights on the bar, too. Don't use vinyl dumbbells from Sears to do your "heavy" day squats, if you know what I mean.

Use your journal minimize the number of times you make the same mistakes. Sure, you won't nip every mistake in the bud the first few (five, ten, fifteen) times, but if you take some time each year to review your journals, it is like mining a vein of pure gold. Try comparing one season to another, try the countback when you peak, and keep looking for those insights that you may have forgotten. It is part of the road to success.

The View from the Top, the “Secret” to Long Term Success: Making it a Habit

Do you open presents on Christmas eve or Christmas morning? What do you eat on Thanksgiving? What color dress would you want your daughter/sister/mother to wear at their wedding? If you can answer those questions without too much thought...you should apply these lessons to athletics!

Rituals and Athletic Success

On the last day of August, I looked back over the month and realized that I had set several personal records, broke an American Record, returned to competition in the Olympic Lifts and passed my 46th birthday.

I had competed in an O lifting meet the first week, offered a long workshop the second week, zipped off to Washington, D.C. for a wedding, traveled to Fort Collins for the next week, and competed in a Highland Games the last...while having both upstairs bathrooms completely remodeled while my wife stayed in D.C. for government work.

It occurred to me that something is going right. In 1991, snatching 314, I tossed the stone at Loch Aidle 40'5". In 2003, snatching 220/231, I tossed the same stone 40'9." In Fort Collins, I tossed the disc well over 160' and added quite a bit to my personal record in the javelin. My marks as a master continue to be better than my Junior College marks and many of my Utah State marks.

I decided to figure it out. I think I stumbled on it in my hotel room in Fort Collins: rituals.

I heard at a life improvement workshop that 95-98% of one's decisions are simply done out of habit. What did you eat for breakfast? I can almost guarantee that whatever you ate was based on habit. I eat four eggs every day. Maybe you eat cereal...or simply drink a cup of coffee. Whatever. Your habits dictate what breakfast you are going to eat.

Coach Maughan told us at our opening team meeting my junior year to "make ourselves slaves to good habits." Simply, over the course of an athletic career, the decisions you make early in the process will stick with you much longer than all the insights gleaned from camps, coaches and internet newsletters.

My four eggs are a ritual. I don't think about it. Yet, those four eggs are full of protein and hold me over until lunch...sometimes longer.

Most people have a "belief" that they are entirely "self-directed." I believe that this is far from true: to experiment, especially those of you who drive cars with clutches, consciously think about the process of changing gears as you accelerate next time. You might have to visit the transmission shop after this experiment. My point? Well, most of live on automatic.

How do rituals relate to habits? The way I want to explain a ritual is this: a ritual is a conscious decision to put into order a set of rules, habits, behaviors until they turn into a habit.

I recently watched an athlete talk himself out of success. His "ritual" is simple: when he doesn't do well, his self-talk volume goes up so that we can all hear it. "What am I doing? What's wrong with me? This is terrible."

That, my friends, is a ritual. Let's talk about *positive rituals!*

The Months leading up to the season...

One of the most important parts of long-term athletic success is the "off-season." One of the first things I do after each season (I break down my training into Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer...as my gym is minus degrees in January and 125 in summer) is to simply take out a piece of paper and write down my "weaknesses." My two most common weaknesses are: "I am a fat pig" and "I need to have stronger arms."

This past year, I worked hard on both of these weaknesses. I think the improvement in my javelin throw is partially due to the rehabilitation work that extra

biceps/triceps work has done for my elbow.

From this simple writing exercise, I plot out a few changes in my training, eating and recovery ideas. I noticed years ago that one of the signs of overtraining for me was the increase of my waist measurement. It wasn't just fat but also the sway of my lower back from fatigue and the lack (or exhaustion) of my core muscles. So, when I tell myself "I'm a fat pig," one of the things I also do is check to see if I burned the candle at both ends for too long. That is OFTEN the case!

This little exercise provides me the opportunity to then plot out my competitions. This next part is simple, you need the following:

- 1 Envelopes
- 2 Stamps
- 3 Checkbook
- 4 Forms for various organizations
- 5 Applications for events

It is at this time, right after reviewing my weaknesses that I turn in the forms for upcoming competitions. I scratch those dates off of my day planner and send the forms in. Tiffini takes care of travel and tries to figure out how she can find a way to go to Chicago or Seattle, but not go to Podunkville, Nowhere, USA.

To me, this is a ritual. Now, the wheels are turning!

The week before competition:

In my humble opinion, most people spend months prepping for competition then toss it all away the last week. My rituals the week of competition are this:

- 1 Don't get a haircut
- 2 Squat snatch with only 95 pounds three days that week for a "whatever" of reps and sets...stay loose and focused.
- 3 Three days before I leave or compete, gather up everything I need and double check to make sure I have everything.

"Don't get a haircut?" I learned this trick from a book, "Everybody is an Athlete." Phil Maffetone, the author, noted that he had absolutely no evidence for this, but he found that people didn't do well with new haircuts. As he thought this through, especially with distance runners, he noted that many of his runners competed week in and week out for months. If you can't spare one weekend to get your haircut, you are obviously overtraining or overcompeting.

So, recently, I broke my own ritual. Part of owning a ritual is knowingly breaking the ritual! I got my hair cut, fully aware that this would have galactic repercussions. I broke several of my personal records that weekend and won "athlete of the day."

What is good about the haircut thing is that now I plan a haircut two to three weeks before an event. In other words, long before I step on the ring, platform or field, I am prepping my success. This is a ritual!!!

The light workouts in the weight room and some easy drilling with the particular sport that I will be competing are hard earned lessons. Since turning 30...during the Reagan Administration...I have noticed that I really need to back off going into competition. I fully subscribe to the Tommy Kono theory that "it is better to be

undertrained than a little bit overtrained.” I can pull out a tough lift or throw if I am fresh, but no way if I am beat up!

Save it for the competitions!

Finally, I can't think of a more important ritual than packing and preparing early. Paul Northway had a laminated check list that he had hooked to his equipment bag. Before each meet, he would add each item and check them for wear and tear. He also had a spare set of shoelaces...a good idea I must finally adopt!

Rituals when things go bad...

I drove about eight total hours to get to Fort Collins. My right hip hurt. The hotel was...and I am being gracious...a dump. There were no “fast food” places around and I was hungry. The guy who was supposed to measure my implements was angry because I stood on the wrong side of the table. I hadn't seen Tiff in three weeks and she had just got off a plane to go home. I was miserable the night before the Nationals.

The same exact thing happened at the Masters National Olympic Lifting meet a year or so before. I had a long list of problems from long flight delays to a noisy neighbor.

Well, what do you do? In Fort Collins, a funny thing happened. I turned on the television and there was an ad for the new Anthony Robbins program, “Get the Edge.” It made me laugh because that immediately kicked on the associations that I needed. In Robbins' language, I needed leverage to change my neuro-associations!

My rituals when things go bad? First and foremost, I have my mantra from Coach Maughan: “I always throw best on my last throw.” For O lifting, think the last clean and jerk. No matter what happens, until it is over, I never judge an event. In other words, wait until you are in the car driving home before you say this was good or bad. My “overriding” ritual for bad days is to wait a little longer before judging it a bad day!!!

My next ritual is to consciously learn something or meet someone new. I know that I place a high value on learning, so when I get in trouble I go out of my way to learn something...anything. This little trick pulls me up...and makes the day worth living.

The most important “ritual” may not seem like a ritual but it is simply this: stick to the plan!

Before competition, I write out little reminders in my notebook. For O lifting meets, I write out my warm up “hopes” and my first two lifts:

<u>Snatch</u>	<u>Clean and Jerk</u>
60	60
70	100
80	
90	
Platform:	
100	130
110	140
???	???

These are from my notes from the Nationals.

Well, I was *way* behind after the snatch because I missed my attempts after the opener. To stay in the comp, I would have to pull a big clean and jerk. My thought process, though, went like this:

“You suck. You choke. You stink. I’ll show them. I will take my opener with a million pounds and win...and then...”

Then, the ritual kicked in. Okay, so it will come down to one lift, so? Get two on the platform first, then take what you need to win. Stay with the plan!

I have been at track meets where a thrower will ask me to critique their warm ups then try to change tech during the contest. Stay with the plan!

Rituals when things go right...

- 1 Enjoy it...you earned it.
- 2 Be thankful
- 3 Be very thankful
- 4 Smile

Stick to the plan...it ain’t over until you drive away!

Three Steps to a "Habit"

1. An Honest Evaluation...

There are two keys to athletic success:

First, know your weaknesses.

Second, know your strengths.

In the off-season, I believe that you need to eliminate your weaknesses (EVERYONE thinks this is true!!!), but more importantly, you have to learn to take advantages of your strengths. In past editions, we have discussed these concepts, but the “honest” part of an honest evaluation is the ability to look at the mirror and remind yourself that a strength you had a decade ago might not still be there! You need to look at the “now.”

Step one can be done in just a few minutes...generally, by the end of a season, most people know exactly the strengths and weaknesses of the past season.

2. Yellow Page Think Sheet

The color doesn’t matter, but I like to rip out a piece of yellow legal paper and, starting from the middle of the page, write a clear goal. Then, in any random form, I start knocking out ideas. “Squat with chains” was one from a little while ago as was “travel to more meets.” As the ideas come out, I often take a moment to write a simple way to get the goal: “buy chains” or “join the Delta Crown Room.” Delta Crown Room? Sure, if you fly a lot on one airline, I discovered that it helps to join their fancy schmancy club to sit around and eat and drink while you wait in the airports.

It doesn’t matter how many things you write down, the important thing is that you engage your mind to come up with every little aspect of the upcoming season. I have found that in addition to airline clubs, I also found that I compete better when I stay at certain hotels that have free breakfasts with eggs and an afternoon happy hour. The “yellow page think sheet” often has diet ideas, equipment needs (javelin!!!), people to contact, audio-visual buys, shoes, gloves and, really, anything that will make me better. I have done this in the kitchen and on airplanes.

Amazingly, after I complete a goal, I often find that this sheet “prophesized” the victory or goal.

Finally,...

3. Show up!!!

Put your evaluation and ideas to work. Great, everyone does that...but, be sure to be at the place (at the right time!) that you are supposed to be to get that goal. *You must be present to win!!!*

The Summa Liftologica

This is the summary of things that I think are “true,” when it comes to sports and fitness. I put this together years ago and still find it worthy of review every few months...

Point, the first: KISS, or Keep It Simple, Stupid!

Overview: *Pareto, the Italian economist, discovered the 80-20 Rule. That is, 20 % of what you do, gives you 80% of the final effort.*

In application, 80% of a company's sales come from 20% of the clients. In athletics, 20% of your training leads to 80% of your competition efforts.

The key is to find the 20% that leads to the "biggest bang for the buck!" Most athletes usually come to the answer that, and this is beyond what mom and dad provided at birth, in the weight room it is the basics: cleans, presses, squats. On the track, it might be stadium steps, hills or sprints. For the endurance athlete, it might be those "hard runs" with friends on Saturdays. Once an athlete knows the techniques, sometimes very great progress is made on the simplest of programs. For example, many, many lifters and throwers used the following program in the Sixties and early Seventies:

Monday: Train Hard (and heavy and go home!)

Tuesday: Rest

Wednesday: Train Hard

Thursday: Rest

Friday: Rest

Saturday: Train very hard; if competing train very hard after competition. Keep the exercise number low, the intensity high!

Essentially, the simpler the better. The key is to trust that honest hard training on basic core movements leads to improvement in lean muscle, performance, and measured strength. For me, this means Power Snatches, Clean and Press, and Overhead Squats. These three lifts make the discus go farther and my total in the Olympic Lifts go up. If all I do is Power Snatch on Monday, Clean and Press on Wednesday, and Overhead Squat on Saturday, I am going to be at 80plus percent of my best. You know, maybe over 100% because ...

Point, the second: Little and Often over the Long Haul!

Overview: *Success is like the erection of a building. It is one brick laid upon another.*

So too, with training: it is the ability to squeeze out five pounds here and a rep there that leads to long term success! Programs that promise huge gains in three weeks don't mention the huge drops the next three. For an example, I offer 1964 Olympic Shot Put Champion Dallas Long's High School lifting bests:

9th Grade

Squat 90 Military Press 90 Bench Press 90

10th Grade

Squat 125 Military Press 125 Bench Press 125

11th Grade

Squat 200 Military Press 200 Bench Press 200

12th Grade

Squat 350 Military Press 275 Bench Press 350

This senior year, he blasted the 16 pound college shot over **61** feet. In 1957!

Prepping for the 64 Olympics, he would bench up to 440 for 3, Incline 370 for 3, and Squat 4 sets of 5 with 400 pounds. These reflect eleven years of training to become

Olympic champ. None of his lifts are breathtaking, none of the leaps in improvement unbelievable. A little here, a little there ...

Point, the third: Have standards.

Overview: *As an Olympic lifter, my squat goes up 200 pounds by adding knee wraps and a supersuit. How does this affect my o lifts? I have no idea.*

Standards are simply that: what are the units that I measure my improvement with? For health, the guys at the Olympic Training Center made it clear that annual blood tests are your best bet. Cholesterol and triglycerides can be compared to past eating behaviors, prostate problems can be checked, even gout by blood tests. A yearly blood test has a standard to compare itself with, last year's blood test.

In lifting, it is a little more murky. Olympic lifters have their best competition snatch and clean and jerks. Powerlifters need to be more careful: one federation may ban certain wraps and belts. The deadlift in competition may serve as a good standard. As long as your lifts go up, you are making progress.

Photos have really helped my wife and may be an idea for others. She stands in the same doorway in a bikini (no, you can't get the proofs) and takes front, side and back. Then she compares and contrasts them with the last batch. She discovered that the scale lies.

Other standards? Well, there are some classic ones: bodyweight military press, bodyweight snatch, and double bodyweight squat are common enough standards that I heard of them in several different settings.

Learn to measure yourself against yourself. But be real: don't fool yourself into thinking that a fifty pound improvement in the squat really happened if you didn't go as deep, or, you have put on fifty pounds with the Monday Night Football Beer and Brautwurst Diet. Also, be wary of using workouts to make comparisons. If you did 3 sets of 8 with 205 in something with a one minute rest and two weeks later did the same sets and reps with 225 with a five minute rest, are you stronger? I have no idea, there are just too many factors.

Measure yourself with simple standards. *Simple!*

Point, the fourth: Eat food.

Overview: *an odd point, perhaps, but more questions are usually generated at a lifting forum by supplements than any single lifting point.*

To recall:

If it works immediately, it is illegal.

If it works quickly, it is banned.

If it sounds too good to be true, it is.

Time and again, I have rediscovered the wisdom of sticking to lots of vegetables, fruits and lean meats. In addition, drinking huge amounts of water helps. What about potassium? Yes, I take that, when I buy it. Flax oil? Great stuff, keeps me regular. Whey protein? I dunno. Creatine? Water gain, I dunno. Super Amino blast? Hmmm. Bee Pollen? B-15? And on and on and on.

If you spend fifty bucks on a product it will work! If you are paid fifty bucks to say it works, you will say it! I still think Bob Hoffman had a clear overview in 1964:

“To summarize: live as normally as possible as the big contest approaches but **reduce your sugar** and starches to a minimum. **Eat lots of protein** and use germ oil concentrate as this has a tendency to reduce excess weight. **Drink normally** until a day or two before the contest. If necessary, take off what weight must be lost the day before and the day of the competition.”

Although this focuses on weight loss for an O meet, this same advice is being sold in literally hundreds of low carb books today. Food is important for training. **Food, I said. Food.**

In addition, beware the “Bathtub Model” of nutrition. Basically, it is this: The human body is a bathtub, the spout is calories in, the drain calories out. Add more water, drain stays the same, makes you fat. Water comes in the same, drain increases, makes you lean. Very simple. So simple it is just not correct. There is an old saying about the human brain: “If it was simple enough to understand, you wouldn’t care to understand it.” The same with the body. Why do people lean out on 6,500 calories a day, while their girlfriend gets fatter (less lean, if you will) on one meal a day and six diet drinks? Because the bathtub model is rubbish!

- 1 Eat food.
- 2 Eat multiple meals a day.
- 3 Eat breakfast.
- 4 Eat.

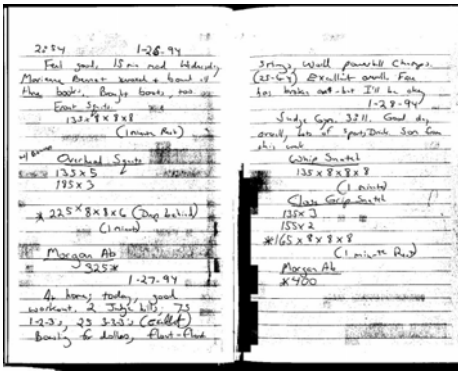
Point, the fifth: There is a time to plant and a time to sow.

Overview: *John Richardson won the Big West discus championship a few years ago. I worked from high school through college with him and asked him what is the best advice I ever gave. He said: “You always say ‘they can’t all be gems.’”* Simply, not every effort in the weightroom will be a new personal record. Trying to do this will only end in misery and frustration, and drug use.

There are times of the year when it is appropriate to kill yourself in the gym. But, sometimes you need to maintain, hold on, and plant the seeds for the next harvest.

Tommy Suggs said it well:

“Train along without pushing yourself. **Train hard and often, but don’t knock yourself out** and stay away from the Olympic lifts. Then five weeks before a contest try yourself out on the Olympic Three. Don’t push too hard and don’t worry if you seem a little weak. Then try to add five pounds a week per lift in the press, snatch and clean and jerk. **Make up your mind that you are going to make progress no matter what.**”



The idea is to lift at your peak at the meet. Every workout over a career can't be the best of all time. Notice, though, that I didn't say "sit in the gym and eat bon-bons and tell everyone that you are a "genetically inferior" and you natural easy gainers don't understand my needs." You need to train heavy and hard, but realize that this doesn't mean "limit" lifts each workout.

For more information: Consult your training journal and try not to keep making the same mistakes

Point, the Sixth: Passion!

Overview: *Why are we willing to keep coming back and face the challenges of sports and life over and over? What is the fuel that drives us? Passion.*

It is funny how often the parallels between life in the real world and sports lead me to understand both a lot better. I had been reading some of those hybrid muscle magazines that cater to men's fitness, health, stereo, DVD player, and clothing needs and I found myself realizing something is missing: in most men's search for "whatever," e.g. youth, riches, success, women, they immediately lose all credibility.

Huh? Trying to look cool...earring, tattoos, pink hair, puka shells, open black shirt with matching black suit...makes you look...well, it makes you look like you are trying to look cool.

Yet, if a man actually take the time to talk to women (shocking!), generally one will find that the way to interest a member of the opposite sex has very little to do with the earrings, tats, and hair.

The same thing that makes a great athlete great is the key to success in life...**Passion!**

Not long ago, during the Super Bowl, a roomful of women all swooned for Jon Gruden, coach of the Tampa Bay Pirates in Pewter Pants Football Team. Gruden, who never met a scowl he didn't like, has something...something...that make women pull the chairs forward and watch a rather pointless game after the first quarter. My friends, according to my wife, Tiffini, there is nothing more "intriguing" than a man fully focused, fully centered, doing something he loves. And, you don't need to go to Hawaii to buy puka shells.

John Powell, double bronze medalist at the Olympics and former World Record Holder in the discus, discovered that the Master athlete needs to break their thinking into two "phases." The first phase is a time to train muscle and nerve, but the second phase may be more important.

Phase Two

John had only one word: **Passion**. From the Latin, “*to suffer*,” I can’t think of a better word to describe the Love/Hate/Suffer/Fury that is required to improve as an athlete. Sadly, many young athletes have all the physical gifts, yet no passion. “The Love of the Game” is a perfect title...for a disappointing movie.

Passion. Well, how do we get it? Master athletes can teach the youth here:

1. Travel to a lot of meets.
2. Hang out with your competition for long periods afterwards.
3. Read everything, watch everything you can about your sport.
4. Travel some more. Hang out some more. Learn more.
5. Spend **your** money on your sport!
6. See number four above!

As a matter of interest, short spurts of intense training increases the natural Growth Hormones of the body...the anti-aging drugs. In Phase Two, a serious attempt to both raise GH and build muscle are a yin-yang relationship!

The research seems to point to several things, if you want to increase GH (and hypertrophy):

1. Eat some protein before lifting...ten to twenty grams.
2. Monitor rest periods between sets (one minute rests have shown, in some studies, to spike GH)
3. Use “full body” lifts, such as my favorites:

Power Clean and Front Squat

Power Curl

Clean and Press

Overhead Squat

Clean grip snatch

Power snatch

Put your time in during Phase Two building your **Passion** and **Body**. Let’s discuss a few ideas that can help one rekindle the passion that drives great athletes. Let’s look at a few obvious ideas:

1. Keep a journal. If I could recommend only one thing, it would be to keep this on-going conversation with yourself. As you link the days together and watch the ebbs and flows of your training and life, you can pick out the clues that lead to success in **your** life...athletically and real!
2. Buy books and videos on your sport. Recently, I watched a video on the snatch and discovered that I know nothing about this lift. I have been snatching since 1975, but I never knew the importance of the jaw and staying on the heels. Yet, one minute after pressing the “stop” button on the VCR, I was in the gym banging away again...I was “rekindled!”

Read magazines, books and internet articles that apply to your sports and ***try new things!***

3. Practice both single and wide focus in your sports. Single focus would be bowling alone on one lane trying to just throw strike balls...ignoring all spares. In your sport of choice, you should occasionally strive to fix just one thing: **all** your resources should pour into attacking or improving one aspect of training. Wide focus is what a football

coach does: the coach measures and adjusts his 92 man team, seven assistants, four managers, bus drivers, et al to deal with the opposing team and the whims of the officiating staff. Both, single and wide focus can be exhausting...but for different reasons.

Single can be “boring,” yet every athlete needs the “groove” from multiple repetitions. Multiple focus can simply over stimulate the senses. The Highland Game experience is a study in multiple focus: dancing, piping, drinking, eating, noise...and up to ten different athletic events with only a few that share any technical skills.

A couple of ideas for training multiple focus: listen to music you hate while you train; train for three sports (throw, lift, carry, whatever) in a single training session; train in extremes...cold, heat, fasting, time of day, odd locations; learn a new sport! Finally, invent new ways to train your current sport...seriously, “think outside the box” and restructure your whole training...or just one aspect of training.

“Passion” fuels the athlete far beyond the next workout, the next week or the next season. It also may be the secret cure to aging!

Questions and Answers

Raise your hand. Go ahead. Now, ask me a question. Get very, very comfortable. I have this “thing” about answering questions. Here you can find some insights into in-season training, the body as one piece, training for the busy guy, defining hard work, off-season training, year round training, basic coaching ideas and my take on recruiting.

Dan, what do you do during the season?

Two rules for In-Season Training

First, the body is one piece. One can only ask so many demands on the system. Once a season begins, it is time to focus on technical and competitive improvements, it is too late to improve on conditioning and strength.

Second, specificity is a miracle worker...but at a steep cost. As one improves in the competitive arena through multiple repetitions, repetitive injuries begin to creep in. Balanced training, or crosstraining, may assist the health of the athlete, but may also overtrain the athlete. In addition, the effort spent to balance training takes away time and energy from training the sport. One might be "healthier," but in second place.

It is important to define "health." According to Phil Maffetone, Health is the systems of the body working optimally. Fitness, on the other hand, is the ability to perform a task. Using the Harvard step test to test the health of wheelchair bound individuals would be obviously wrong, yet we often use running to test the health of strength and power athletes, like football players. Health can be measured by comparing blood tests; fitness is simply the ability to do a given task.

The implications of this discussion for the in-season athlete is simple: the athlete must measure fitness by improvement in sport, yet be sure to address issues of health. Drink water, don't smoke, wear a seat belt, avoid sugar, and keep your relationships healthy. Simple advice, but often ignored during the season. If your not using your seat belt, ignore discussions about creatine.

A wonderful system for holding peak condition for weeks and weeks was developed by guys in California. It involves training hard three days a week with weights, as well as three hard days of training the sport. The key, though, was to lift and train on the same days, while resting the other four.

Monday: Train hard

Tuesday: Rest

Wednesday: Train hard

Thursday: Rest

Friday: Rest

Saturday: After the competition, train very hard

Sunday: Rest

I have trained athletes using this system, but young athletes tend to want to train daily. I believe that some athletes compromise the hard days by doing these extra "easy" workouts and miss the underlying concept of this program: to improve you have to have high intensity. So, I have done a lot of compromises and shifting and the like...here are a few "near" truths:

1. The "heavy" day should be the day after a game...actually, right after a game works well, too, especially for underclassmen who play on the day before the Varsity, having them train on the Friday, for example, helps a lot.

2. "Another" day should be stuff that doesn't take a lot of nerve. Don't Snatch and Clean and Jerk, so to speak. Box Squats, Straight Leg Deadlifts, some dumbbell work and a few machines would work well, but don't have the athlete tax his nervous system.

3. Don't be surprised if he gets really stronger, maintains, or drops way down. Any reaction to the training program is normal. We used to find a lot of kids improved their cleans a lot in the football season. My idea then was that they were finally cleaning once a week with supervision. Now, I have another idea: sled work, driving the legs, sprints and the games were all training the system to clean better. Benching and squatting tend to drop, but that seems normal vis-à-vis the work load of football.

4. Don't be afraid to cut the volume, but strive to keep the intensity up. 5 x 5 just isn't going to work, but 2 x 5 would be fine. Pyramids would be 2-2-1, that kind of thing.

5. Watch the acne. If he starts breaking out, getting colds, that kind of thing...he is really overtraining. HS kids can handle a ton of volume, then they seem to crash.

Seriously, watch the acne and the mood swings. Very often, that was the first sign something was going on with the athlete. Usually, it wasn't the training, but late nights, a new girlfriend, dance classes in the morning (seriously...don't get me started) or some other idiocy.

Question: What do you mean "the body is one piece?"

First, that is a good question. But be sure to understand the concept of "one piece." It is something I learned years and years ago and I call it the two rules:

- 1. Most human bodies come in one piece.**
- 2. Specificity works, but it leads to problems.**

The one piece concept is the idea that nothing a bodybuilder believes, basically, is true. If you tell me that benches are an upper body exercise, I need merely stick a fork in your calf while you bench your max. If it only is upper body, the fork should have no affect on your lift. Yet, it does. Be careful who you do this experiment with, some people take it to extremes.

Being "one piece" is the real gift of the O lifts and why they carry over to Highland Games and the four Olympic throws; shot, disc, hammer, and javelin. I have a video somewhere of Soviet high jumpers doing set after set after set of power snatches to improve their jump. What the **overhead squat** and the O lifts, perhaps a few others too, including the front squat, do for the athlete is demand flexibility, balance, total muscular development, kinetic awareness and movement into one package.

After a few months of serious overhead squat work, you might only notice larger spinal

erectors. Yet, your vertical jump and other athletic moves will increase. At the Upper Limit gym, we used to measure VJ, standing long jump and both "three jumps." (Continuous three jumps, hop-hop-hop, or, three combined standing long jumps) Athletes would improve radically when they started doing the Overheads and/or O lifts. These athletes were also off the "learning curve" for the jumps, so any increase usually reflected training. Well, I like to think that, anyway. For a football player or a thrower, the "one piece" idea really carries over to the reality of the field of play. "Looks like Tarzan, Plays like Jane" is my favorite quote for coaches.

I hope this answers your question. The concept of "one piece" always needs to be tempered with "specificity works-but at a price." If all you did was snatch and clean and jerk, you would get very, very good in those lifts. If you did them for seven hours a day, six days a week, you would get even better. Or get crushed. Lynn Jones calls this "the Bulgarian Butcher System," if you survive, you thrive.

That's "the price" of specificity.

Dan, I am seriously busy with life, career...you know what it's like...can you help out?

Training for the Busy Working Guy

A couple of principles that I follow might help the "thinking process" of someone who works a normal job, has a social life, and still wants to train.

First, embrace the concept of "Pareto's Law." This Italian economist discovered the "80-20 Rule"...that is, 80 percent of your results comes from 20 percent of what you do. In a football program, you will find that 20 percent of your athletes produce 80 percent of the yards, the tackles and the points. In training, 20 percent of your program will get you to that 80 percent mark. That other 80, of course, gets you ever closer to that elusive moment when you produce a "100 percent effort." That could mean one's lifetime best lift, throw, or physical condition.

I have recommend for years that athletes attend to this 20 percent as early as they can in the athletic career. It can be summarized in a simple question: if, for some reason, you could only train 45 minutes a week (three sessions of fifteen minutes), what would you do? The answer to this question, if honestly addressed, is the key to a busy working guy's training. Would you warmup? Do yoga? Well, then, what? As a discus thrower, I answered this question with a couple sets of overhead or front squats, then half-turn drills with a powerball into a wall. I could easily hold "80 percent" on that schedule.

So, what are your goals? If you are an O lifter, what would you do in those 45 minutes? I might alternate snatches and clean and jerks through those 15 minute workouts. What about this or that or this...yes, they are important...but I only have a few minutes!

So, the working guy has to take the long-term goal and run it into the "Prison Riddle," the 45 minute question first. What ever answer arises...is the beginning point of the solution to the quandary of being a full-time person and a full-time athlete.

Second, take a touch of insight from the book, "Dinosaur Training." On page 113, Brooks Kubik notes an old IronMan "Roundtable" where John Wooten describes his training:

"I started out on a strength routine, really piling on the poundage in the following exercises:

1. Two hands deadlift, favorite exercise of Goerner
2. Walk with weight, favorite exercise of Milo of Crotona
3. Carry bar in dead lift position, favorite exercise of Arthur Giroux
4. Bent Presses, favorite exercise of Saxon
5. Reverse Continental and jerk from behind neck, favorite exercise of Saxon."

Well, there is a great insight here: what is the favorite lift of the "heroes and heroines" of your sport? Westside powerlifters should look at Box Squats, O lifters who like Bulgarian training, should think about Front Squats, fans of Russian training should look to squats, power cleans and heavy spinal erector work.

I have been collecting "gems" of lifting and recording them in a little red notebook since 1975. Every time I hear a point that just "rings true," I add it to this book. I have found through the years that one exercise keeps showing up as a "favorite lift:" the power clean. John Terpak, George Woods, many Soviets, lots of American lifters and throwers have labeled the power clean as "key" to athletic success. Certainly, take a little bit of this advice, no matter how busy, and toss power cleans into your program.

Read what the greats do...and follow their advice. Not blindly, of course, but when enough people argue for this or that as the key to success, listen. I'm a contrarian at heart, I like to go the opposite direction of the crowd at times, but, trust me, adding the O lifts, one hand lifts, overhead work or strongman moves is as contrarian as anyone can get in the last two decades.

Finally, this question deals with an interesting idea...what lifts give the most bang for the buck?

My short list:

- 1 Clean and Press...if all you did was Clean and Press, you could be awesome
- 2 Front Squat...flexible, solid and strong
- 3 Power Snatch and Overhead Squat Combo...Tony Nielson, a young man I coached for a few years, was the smallest football player on the field, yet I watched him run for 200+ yards in several games. His reason: this combo. Easy to learn, difficult to master, excellent long term benefits.
- 4 Dragging a sled, pushing a car or hill sprints...shoot me, but I believe these are superior to squats for most athletes.
- 5 Power Clean...'nuff said
- 6 Farmer Walk...a year ago, I would have laughed at these...now, I don't laugh
- 7 One arm lift of some kind...they work, they are simple to learn, they work

Total equipment needs: bar...weights; a revolving Olympic dumbbell is nice, a pair of heavy dumbbells are nice...all you need is a bar and weights.

Option One: Saturday and Sunday Superstar

This kind of program is designed for the person who has some time on the weekends and not much the rest of the week:

Saturday

Lift Day

Power Snatch

Power Clean

Front Squat

One arm lifts (Clean and Press to max each hand)

Whatever reps and sets you like...I like 3 x 3 or 2 x 5 or Singles (after warm ups, these are the “meat” sets)

Sunday

Strongman or Highland Games or Whatever you like Day

Power Clean and Press (Singles up to a Max)

Sled dragging, car pushing, hill sprints

Anything else you would like to do!!!

Farmers Walk (Death March Style)

One other day a week (Wednesday???)

One lift: either Power Clean and Press, Power Snatch and Overhead Squat (might be best of the lot), Front Squat, Power Clean

Some kind of carry: Farmers Walk, maybe that “Dead lift carry” idea, sandbags.

That’s it. Now, O lifters would do the classic lifts on perhaps Saturday, and the power moves and squats on Sunday, with the “other” workout being an 80 percent (or less) total day. Highland Gamers would add an event or two on the back end of each day, although I would keep the walks and the dragging stuff.

Option Two:

Abbreviated Training Clusters:

Week One

Day One

Power Snatch

Front Squat

One arm Clean and Press

Farmer Walk

Day Two

Power Clean

Power Clean and Press

Overhead Squat

Sled Dragging, Car Pushing or Hill Sprints

Week Two

Day One

Power Clean and Press

Power Snatch and Overhead Squat

Front Squat

Day Two

One arm lifts (Presses, Snatches, Swings, deadlifts, whatever...have fun!)

Sled drag, car push, hill sprints

Farmers Walk

Just a few ideas...for the busiest of the busy.

Dan, I enjoy your stuff...but, I haven't been making progress. I have been running about five miles a day and I am working harder than I ever have worked in my life, but I have nothing to show for it. Can you help me out?

Are you sure you are working hard?

Let me bore you with a story...It was another one of those school assemblies where they allow the coaches to tell the school about their recent successes. You begin to drift and stare down the wall clock above the stage after the first thirty minutes or so. Then, somebody said something that woke me up.

"Nobody works as hard as we do!" When I heard the high school Cross Country coach say this to the school assembly, I was frankly surprised at this blanket statement issued in front of dancers, debaters, academics, musicians and sojourners on the way of life. Life is hard...Cross Country is more of a sport, really.

I was more surprised that nobody from the wrestling team bounded up on stage and tossed him off with a head and shoulder throw. Yet, we have seemed to have harvested this cultural notion that a hard breathing, sweaty kid with flailing arms and awful form is...*working hard*.

Let me state my point simply with a statement that has caused me more arguments and bad feelings than anything one could imagine: the typical high school discus thrower could duplicate the typical high school cross country runners workout far sooner than the reverse. Why? Simply, athletes who train for power can quickly add the “endurance” (whatever that term actually means) much easier than the typical jogger can transform into an explosive dynamo.

Recently, my brother-in-law, Craig, bought a kilt, signed his name to entry form and began his first Highland Game. He competed along side my wife, Tiffini, and me as we began that interesting day long competition that most associate with men in dresses. They are “kilts” and only idiots ask what is under them.

After a few warm up tosses with each implement and three competition throws, the volume of tosses adds up. Stone put, 56 pound weight for distance, 28 pound weight for distance, hammer throw...then the caber toss. The caber toss separates the novice from the neophytes, it is very hard to turn the caber the first time you see one. Following this event, we had the sheaf toss and, finally, the 56 pound weight for distance. Towards the end of the day, Craig asked me: “I think I need food or something...I’m just not all here.”

I don’t think the scientific journals have caught up with Craig’s problem. His heart rate was close to normal, no need to wear a heart monitor at a Highland Game. His muscles were “fresh,” he hadn’t pumped them up with a supersetted Triceps Extensions and EZ Curl workout. Yet, he was drifting off. I knew the feeling: he actually had eaten, filled himself with fluids, and stayed in the shade. But, his body wasn’t ready for “it.”

Ah, what is “it.” Before you lock yourself back in an elementary Philosophy Class studying Socrates, let me simply quote from Crossfit’s Foundation statement: “Heavy load weight training, short rest between sets, high heart rates, high intensity training, and short rest intervals, though not entirely distinct components, are all associated with a high neuroendocrine response.” What Craig experienced was a “systems failure,” in other words, he had never trained for these events that make for heavy load, short rest, high hearts...and his “metabolism” voted to knock off for the rest of the day.

Throwing the caber involves picking up a log that weighs around 100 to 200 pounds, pointing it straight into the sky, running with it while it rubs your skin off, stopping, and performing an Olympic Lift with it. After you throw, of course, polite Highland Games behavior insists you carry it back for the next competitor. Your heart rate goes through the roof, “catching your breath” becomes more than just a cliché, and you discover small bleeding wounds on your hands, chest and neck. In what seems like seconds, you then hear, “you’re up!”

Highland Games are only one of many “strength sports” that teach the athlete the need for neuroendocrine response training to simply meet the needs of the sport. Certainly, in team sports like rugby and football, the efficient coach would find a friend in the Crossfit (see <http://crossfit.com>) approach. I would argue that ALL of track and field...including our distance people...would find the path to personal greatness quicker with an approach based on the credos of Crossfit.

During my undergraduate years at Utah State, Mark Enyeart returned to train in Logan. A high school sprinter, he had become a middle distance runner under the tutelage of Coach Ralph Maughan. Enyeart was the national collegiate champion as well as an American Olympian. His return literally changed the USU running program...Mark lifted weights. Heavy weights. He didn't look like a starvation victim; he had muscles...a physique! And, on the track, he ran everyone down. Soon, my running teammates joined me in the salty, musty air of the team weightroom. One example was worth a thousand articles.

Time and again, people ask me "what is the key to proper training?" It is "time." Sure, you can go out and walk, literally, for twelve hours a day. You could consider this training, but would it prepare you for a Highland Game or fight to the death? Long hours do not make the demands on the physiology that intense training does in just a few seconds, at most a few minutes.

In my opinion, the single best piece of training equipment in a gym is one of those cheap wall clocks with the large faces and the sweep second hand. The key for me is that second hand...I keep the majority of my rest periods at one minute. Moreover, my clocks usually remind me of my children. I steal their old Disney clocks when they move from one movie to the next. I have trained with the 101 Dalmatians and the Little Mermaid. Not long from now, I will be training with "In Sync."

Use the minute hand to time your total training time. The best powerlifters in the world come from Westside Gym in Columbus, Ohio and their workouts last about half an hour. The Eastern European Olympic Lifters call it quits after 45 minutes. How long do you train? I have a little time experiment I use with my young throwers: Tabata Front Squats. We put on perhaps 65 pounds on the rack and insist that the athlete have a good view of the second hand. Rack the bar on your chest and get as many reps as you can, in good solid form, in twenty seconds. Rack the bar and rest ten. Repeat. Repeat. The Tabata front squats are done in that fashion...20 on, 10 off...for four minutes.

There is a \$12,000 machine that guarantees overall improvements in four minutes, the Time Machine. See? I saved you \$12,000. My athletes unanimously agree that time seems to stand still during the second minute. Why do we do this? First, it is a sound method of bringing up "capacities," whether aerobic or anaerobic would be somebody else's guess. Second, it teaches what can be done in four minutes. Literally, I have never had an athlete want to do much else after this exercise, besides flop on the ground.

Four minutes to hard work might sound like a quick fix...well, okay, it is, but the front squat is not easy. It takes an element of discipline to learn how to do the front squat starting from the wrist flexibility needed to hold the bar to the hip flexibility needed to go deep. You must remain upright in the lift at all times and the bar seems to want to choke you as you gulp air. We work up to 30% or more in the Tabata Front Squats and we need "encouragement" to get anyone to do them more than once a month. Yet, the benefits are amazing. Sure, we all look a little leaner, but as competitive Olympic Lifters, we have found that this lift carries over to the competitive platform! First, you have the "wind" to handle several limit repetitions on the platform within a few minutes. Second, you seem to train the nerves to constantly "get up" from a deep position. This second point may have applications for the deadlift, squat, military press, and, with safety considerations, the bench press.

The best piece of equipment for a home gym? The wall clock. One can start by

timing the total period of training, then move to measuring rest times. With some training ideas, like Tabatas, the clock becomes judge and jury over the entire exercise. The long term benefits of adding “Coach Clock” are amazing.

The Cross Country coach started reading off the names of the freshman girls’ team and the mileage they would run in a typical day. I realized that the clock stops moving if you stare at it long enough.

Dan, what do you do in the off-season?

First, address...honestly address...your weaknesses. I will put my “Confessions” from the past few years:

- 1 I’m a fat pig.
- 2 I have no hamstring strength/flexibility
- 3 I have flat feet
- 4 I have no arms...really, I have no biceps and triceps
- 5 I am all over the place technically...what works for me?
- 6 I have to learn to relax
- 7 Where has the fun gone?
- 8 I need to get my bench up

By honestly addressing these issues, first in my journal, next with a piece of paper and some freewriting ideas, finally with a trusted friend (usually John Price...Mike Rosenberg is a good one, too...my wife, Tiffini is very good, but a little too honest), I can come up with a few focused fixes.

One thing that I know is true...and this is the mission of my newsletter. Especially,

"All training is *complementary*."

If I am peaking towards a local weightlifting meet, I know I am in shape to compete in a Highland Games. I know that playing flag football will help my legs for O lifting. So, unless something BIG is coming up, I let my training be 1. Complementary, and 2. Focused on my weaknesses.

Recently, I discovered that my Stone Put...especially in the Open Stone...was pathetic. I have dropped a few feet a year for the past few years. At the Shamrock Games in Illinois, it was the worst.

So, I went to a local Sporting Goods store and paid \$20 for a high school shot. In just three training sessions, I added back five feet to my open stone put.

This little “oh, how wonderful I am story” has a good moral: I recognized a problem, spent money, trained on it and fixed it. That is a good four step process for the off-season.

So, how do you do it all? First, toss out this mental image that you must have absolute specificity for everything you do! Olympic lifting competition will help you in the caber as much as training on the big sticks seven days a week. Specificity works...but at a price of injuries, boredom and the loss of opportunities to compete, see the world and have some fun!

So, to answer you:

“If you had everything where would you put it?” as Steven Wright, the comedian, put it.

“If you had to do everything everyday, when would you have time to do it?” I ask.
Use the whole year...or decade...to plot and plan your training.

How do you prepare an athlete "year round?" For example, if you are just going to focus on one sport...

Excellent question. What is the key? Here is my answer:

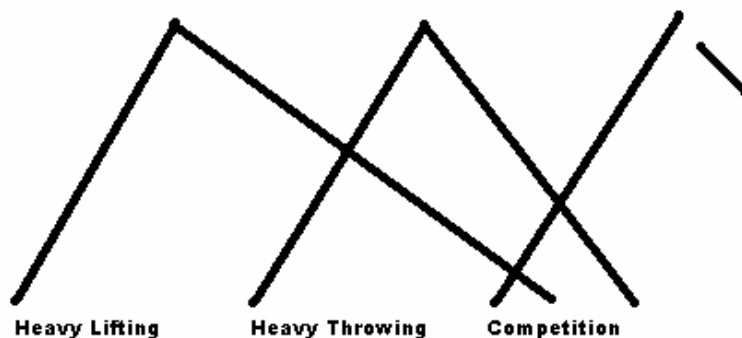
The challenge is balancing all the wonderful training regimes and ideas and programs and protocols and athletic opportunities and games and sports and recovery and rest and vacation and life and lawn mowing...into some kind of coherent approach to your basic goals!!!

I once stated that I considered Highland Games as the best discus training an athlete could undertake. “How do you HG in the middle of track season?” You don’t!!!

Highland Games is the best prep for discus throwing...after the season. Olympic lifting is the ideal way to train for throwing, too, but don’t compete at the Nationals in O lifting the week before Discus Regionals! Let’s look at how I approach working with a high school athlete:

For years, I used a very simple model for training my high school throwers. It was the “Triple Pyramid.”

Three Phased Approach



In the late fall, after football season for many of my throwers, we jumped into an exhausting period of heavy lifting. Other athletes were coming in from volleyball or simple off-season conditioning. The program that we slowly evolved into for the first month or so was called the “Transformation Program.” We had discovered that the athletes needed to “get in shape,” even though they were “in shape.”

Huh? Well, the ability to spend 48 minutes of banging into another person is one kind of conditioning, but to throw and lift was another. The “Transformation Program” answered this riddle for us...monitored higher rep training focusing on “throw strength.”

Day One: (Perhaps Monday)

Power Clean and Military Press: One power clean and eight presses. 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest between sets. *If there is a single key to the program, it is the one minute rest period. By strictly monitoring the rest period, and obviously keeping track of the weight, one can track progress.*

Power Curl: 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest between sets. Using a curl grip, slide the weight to just above the knees and “curl-clean” the bar. Let it come down under control. Again, get all eight reps in, don’t change the weights, and monitor the rest period.

Some kind of ab work. We used side bends, but any kind of crunch is fine, too.

Day Two: (a day or so later, perhaps Wednesday)

Power Clean and Front Squat: One power clean and eight front squats. Once again, 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest. Stay “tall” in the front squats and keep your elbows high. We usually use this as more of a warm up for the next exercise.

Overhead Squats: 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest. Using the wide snatch grip, lock the elbows with the weight overhead and squat down. Athletes who do this exercise well not only develop flexibility, balance and leg strength, but an incredibly strong lower back. Overhead squats make you very strong.

Again, finish with some kind of **ab work**.

Day Three (perhaps Friday or Saturday)

Whip Snatches: 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest. With a wide snatch grip, stand up and hold the bar at crotch level. Dip and snatch the bar over head. Continue for 8 reps. You will be surprised how quickly this exercise can get into your blood. If you want big traps and explosion, this is the king.

Clean grip snatches: 3 sets of 8 with one minute rest. With a clean grip, stand up and dip the bar to your knees. Then, explode up driving the bar, in one basic movement, over head. It is like a clean and press, well, without the clean.

Ab work if you wish.

I also had a “Throws Manager,” often a young boy or girl who wanted to help a thrower boyfriend or girlfriend...or just someone who liked the thrower community, keep detailed charts of the lifts and the reps. By comparing these week to week...and athlete to athlete...I began to get a feel for “numbers.”

Some “Good” Numbers...for a Teenage Boy
Press 105

Power Curl 115

Front Squat 115

Overhead Squat 95

Whip Snatch 95

Clean Grip Snatch 95

Now...we expect MUCH more for better athletes and adults. And this is 3 x 8 with a

What is an “Elite” Athlete?

One of the hardest things for me to deal with as a coach is a parent who is pushing their kid to do stuff that...well...the kid can't or don't wanna do! I got a call from a dad trying to push his daughter into using one of my roughest training programs, “The Big 21,” and had nothing but problems. Simply, she wasn't strong enough to be able to use the weight changes required...she barely could lift 45 pounds and the program demands lots of plate changes.

A couple years ago, I did a workshop for some very good high school throwers and the first question came from a “dad.” So, I put together this short list on some basics of being an “elite athlete.”

What is an elite athlete?

1. The athlete no longer is on a steep learning curve. The athlete, in other words, is no longer improving in quantum leaps from year to year, or season to season. Lifts, for example, no longer double over two years. Improvement is slow.
2. The athlete has a **year-round** approach to one sport.
3. The athlete uses some form of **intense training camp** or focused training of some kind each year.
4. The athlete uses **high levels of strength training** before the competitive periods. Save for lifters, as strength levels go down, performance should improve.

The athlete has made a **personal choice** to be elite.

minute rest.

This Transformation Program did a lot of good. Most of the athletes “felt better,” ...a little leaner, joints felt good, a nice overall feeling of wellbeing.

This would not last long.

The “season” would then begin to shape up with the period known as “Heavy Lifting.” The best overall program we ever used was the “Big 21,” but we also used lots of adaptations for other athletes, like Paul Northway and Taylor Arrigo-Jones.

The “Big 21” DEMANDS a lot of conservative weight selections the first week or so and rewards the athlete with new levels of strength and toughness. The downside? Near exhaustion for someone not “in shape!”

The Big “21”

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

Three Lifts only!

Clean and Press

Power Snatch

Power Clean and Jerk

Now, the confusing part!

Each workout, add five pounds to the Opening Weight. After three weeks, Opening Weight will be 45 pounds more!

Rules:

1. All reps must be successful!
2. Start each rep from the floor
3. Do each rep under control-start with hips down, and fully extend!

Note well: each of the three lifts is to be done each of the three days a week. In addition, one is expected to add five pounds to EACH lift all nine workouts...over the three weeks.

I have laughed many times when people have “adapted” this program and told me in an email that it wasn’t very hard. One guy only did presses on Monday, snatches on Wednesday and jerks on Friday...and noted the 21 reps were a breeze.

Sure! That was only 1/3 of the workout each day. What always amazed the athletes is how *fast* this workout goes. Constant plate moving seems to speed the lifting up.

Reps and Sets...for each of the three lifts!

Opening Weight x 5

Add five pounds x 5

Add five pounds x 5

Add five pounds x 1

Add five pounds x 1

Add five pounds x 1

Add five pounds x 1

Add five pounds x 1

Add five pounds x 1

Total Repetitions **21**

You see: the Big 21!

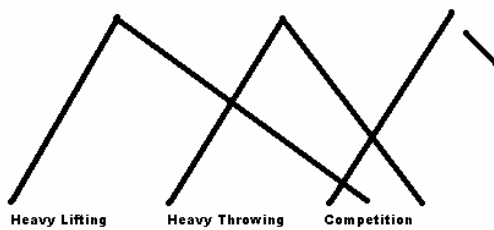
<u>Record end weight</u>	<u>Clean & Press</u>	<u>Snatch</u>	<u>Jerk</u>
Session One	_____	_____	_____
Session Two	_____	_____	_____
Session Three	_____	_____	_____
Session Four	_____	_____	_____
Session Five	_____	_____	_____
Session Six	_____	_____	_____
Session Seven	_____	_____	_____
Session Eight	_____	_____	_____
Session Nine	_____	_____	_____

One hint: you may wish to only do “threes” on the Clean and Jerks. At the end of three weeks, take a week off of heavy lifting, then go to the Transformation Program for a week or two before repeating. If you have timed the “Heavy Lifting” correctly, you may be able to sneak a weightlifting contest just before the Christmas Vacation. The athletes can max out on the three lifts...then enjoy the weeks off.

On the “off days,” we did what we could depending on weather. Often, we took Thursdays off and focused on a little throwing on Tuesdays.

The lifting is important here, not the actual throwing, but, there should some daily work on throwing drills, discussion, video or whatever.

Three Phased Approach



Notice how “Heavy Lifting” doesn’t disappear, but continues well into the season. For my throwers, we now enter into the time of year for “Heavy Throwing.” This includes, but is not limited to:

- 1 Indoor Weight Throwing (the hammer)
- 2 Powerballs against the walls
- 3 Tire Throwing (see the book)
- 4 Lots of Farmer Walks for stability
- 5 Highland Game Weights for Distance
- 6 Overweight implements

How long does this last? I like to keep at this until at least the first few meets of the track season, BUT with less volume as we approach the meets.

What to do in the weightroom? My favorite choice was the “Transformation Program.” Why? 15 minute workouts!!!

One of the goals of this time of year that I set as a coach was to only train my athletes one hour a day. The Transformation Program should NEVER take longer than 12-15 minutes! This gives the athletes lots of time, 45 minutes, to work on the throws.

Remember, throwing into a wall prevents the long hikes in between throws. In addition, tires and weights don't go very far!

In season, the Competition phase, was very easy. If you get a chance, read my book, "The Contrarian Approach to the Discus Throw." In this, you will discover two drills: the Soviet Drill and One Throw Competitions. This is all you will need plus an occasional set of overhead squats or snatches or clean and presses. "The hay is in the barn," so you can't really pound out a great workout or two and expect success. Usually, the "peak" for an athlete was shaped by the months leading up to the event...not the days.

Dan, great answer. Could you discuss the pitfalls of coaching and give us a few ideas about basic coaching?

Sure, he is my biggest problem: I love gimmicks. I honestly love them. Invent a new drill or a new piece of equipment or a new implement or a new system and I will spend a lot of money and research the web and telephone everybody I can get to pick up the receiver. I'm completely positive that I can add two percent to my throw by spending \$300 on a set of chains for squatting in my home gym.

Yet, when I coach others, I am perhaps the most boring coach the world has ever seen. I talk about two things: technique and, well, technique...but I toss in pure, good old fashioned "get stronger" strength training, too. That's it for most people. Do your sport right and get stronger.

Until you have about ten years under your belt in your chosen sport, that is actually pretty good advice! Recently, it occurred to me that one of the biggest problems with the vast amount of information on the internet and the sheer volume of books relating to strength and bodybuilding is simply a beginner leaps beyond the basics and...well, let's talk about what usually happens...

A couple of things I read recently sparked my attention. First, I was asked by a large website to contribute some articles on Olympic Lifting, so I dropped by and read some of the other stuff they offer. I found myself reading a review of 18 year old boy's experiences using a "super supplement," "Super-bol" or something, and his "incredible" improvements in two months. The more I read of this guy's experiences, the more I laughed. Basically, an untrained teen started training hard and thought the miracle supplement was the key to his honestly lackluster results.

Second, I was asked to help a high school program turn-around their throwers. As I talked with the head coach, it became very apparent the problems they had faced: they were using a program designed for an elite thrower for kids who didn't know how to hold the shot.

In a nutshell, there is the problem: beginners will improve by simply doing the sport. Nothing else is needed. In fact, if you jump up the ladder of intensity too soon, you can't really take advantage of these "tricks" later!

Before we get into the answer, let's look at the stuff that literally drives me to drink (do I sound a little too thankful?), or, at least, to shake my head quite often.

My list of things that drive me crazy in training beginners:

Programs with Percentages: This is the biggest offender. I have worked with freshman

boys who can bench 95 pounds with a barbell for five to eight reps, yet fail over and over again with 100 pounds. On the Universal Bench Press, sophomores can quickly get up to 180 for sets of 8, 190 for fives and fail over and over at 200. By the way, I was describing myself, too! Yet, all too often, we take a high school athlete and stick them into a percentage program...without looking at the reality of what they are doing. The classic tables from the Soviet Union do not reflect the reality of the learner. There are coaches, yes, I am thinking of Bish, who have the ability to utilize percentage programs in a high school setting. Usually, however, you see athletes doing rep after rep with weights that have absolutely no relative meaning to their actual strength. What, honestly, is you max squat the first six months you are learning the lift? It is usually much, much more than one thinks.

Magic: This can be anything from pills, potions and lotions to chains, bands, boards, bumpers, shoes, belts...anything, really. Most of us know what I am talking about...you go into a forum, or a new site, and they are offering a “revolutionary” new idea to melt fat and increase your strength. For the beginner, magic can be anything that is beyond the learning of the basic techniques of the sport and the slow progress towards increasing power and strength. Magic can be plyometrics, isometrics, supplements, or whatever... The key is this: later, this stuff might shoot this athlete through the roof, but in the beginning it simply clouds the water of athletic improvement. In fact, let me toss out this to ponder: if you bring magic in too early for an athlete, you might find that it won't work as well later when the appropriate time comes along!

Ignoring Tactics: Tactics are the battlefield plans and changes of plans. One of the things that I have never fully understood is when I ask a guy what sport he does and he says “I'm a bodybuilder.” “Have you ever competed?” “No, I'm not into competing.”

Well, then, your “sport” isn't bodybuilding. Beginners need to compete early and often. I always push people who want to learn the O lifts into competitions as soon as possible. When I first met Dick Notmeyer, he told me that I would compete in three weeks. I had never seen a “live” snatch until that day...I had only seen photographs. With the pressure of time and the experience of competition, I learned an enormous amount in those three weeks and even more the day of the meet. Mentally, I learned the controlled fire that one has to have to O lift...I could have read volumes about it or stepped on the platform in front of a crowd with just me and the bar.

I have mentioned numerous times the story of my college buddy who decided to enter a bodybuilding meet. He dieted down for six weeks, training twice a day, tanning at every opportunity and practice his full posing routine twice a day...in front of his friends and the guys in the gym. Don't laugh, I learned more about sports from watching him than I had in years. He was famished all the time and would lay on the floor a lot while training. After he competed, his body exploded in a number of positive ways as he thickened up and learned from his ordeal.

Contrast him with all those “bodybuilders” who trained the whole six weeks with him. None of them showed any improvement...ever. If you want to improve, you have to compete!

Shoe don't fit: I had a dad call me a number of times with questions about the “Big 21”

program...a great program which assumes a number of things:

1. You are well grounded in the Olympic Lifts.
2. You are someone who can snatch, press and clean in the mid-100's, at least
3. You have off days to recover

The dad wanted his daughter to do the Big 21 and I told him several times that it was an advanced program. He ignored that advice, of course, and would call several times getting the details. Finally, he forced/made his daughter start the program. The next day, I get the call: "Dan, this won't work because she can do the presses with 45, but can't do the jumps up to 100 and the program is supposed to have her do 135 in three weeks but she can't do 100." "I know...I kept telling you it wouldn't work." The conversation continued for a long time, but it never got better.

You can't force an athlete to perform a program that they are not suited for either in terms of experience or athletic maturation. Yet, we often see coaches using concepts from professional sports to teach third graders.

It is a formula that only drives the kids/the athletes into hating sports.

So, what do we do?

Training beginners must focus on the correct repetitions of the competitive sport. In addition to the technically perfect (well...close as we can get) we slowly build up the physical components.

Dan, I heard you speak at a national gathering and you complained about recruiting. I didn't follow you exactly, what is your issue with recruiting?

I found this quote a few years ago and I keep it in a file on my desk...it is "just perfect."

"Believing a player can easily bulk up after he arrives on campus, the Sooners will embrace a rangy schoolboy who has exceptional quickness and agility, as long as he has the frame that can hold the added muscle supplied with the help of the team's weight program.

When scouting talent, Oklahoma coaches have little use for the complex statistical analyses devised by recruiting services. They'd rather know whether a prospect excels at multiple positions or in multiple sports, evidence of wider athletic ability. "We recruit athletes..."

"The Pillage People," Sports Illustrated, August 12, 2002. Page 65

The problem, the issue I have with recruiting...well, it is recruiting!

Speed and Smarts

Years ago, I was standing next to my college track coach, Ralph Maughan, and he made a very simple statement about recruiting college athletes...something he was very successful at doing. "Always recruit speed and smarts because you can't coach either of them." You just heard a line of genius...*speed and smarts*. Under a year round coaching situation at a four-year university, an athlete born with speed and blessed with brains can transform him/herself into a solid conference performer by their senior year. Don't ask

me about height, weight, sport, or whatever...given enough speed and brains, miracles can happen. Smarts is easy enough to check on with SAT, ACT, admissions work, grade point average, and even a casual conversation. Speed is usually evident in the performance of the sport. A horrendous high school technician has probably only just learn the rudiments of the sport. Given a year round approach and any level of coaching...you might have a gem.

Pitfall the first...

Why, oh why did high school programs start developing year-round sports? A local high school demands that their baseball players, whom they recruit from midget ball, play year-round baseball. Fine, I say, I don't care. I really don't. But, think this through...

1. Who usually dominates Little Leagues? The kids who mature first.
2. What kind of athlete would forgo playing other sports? The kids who matured first and find they hit their adult height...at 5'4" ...and don't want to get pounded by kids 6'4".
3. What message are you sending to the other coaches? We don't want you...we don't need you.
4. Exactly what **complementary** lessons will these kids learn...playing one sport all year? None.
5. Long-term chances of improvement? I don't often see it.

Okay, so you recruit this kid who played one sport, year-round, for four years into a college program. Ask yourself...how much can this kid get better? Notice the approach mentioned by the Oklahoma Sooners...they look for multi-sport *athletes*. In Utah, many high school basketball coaches won't allow their basketball players to compete in other sports. How fair is it to this kid, let's say 6'3" and 185 pounds, to explore his limits in basketball only?

How many white Utah kids under 7'6" are there in the NBA?

The first problem I see with recruitment for any sport is insisting, at the basic level, on the athlete committing his/her full life on a year-round basis on one sport. We simply don't know what the future holds. You may have a world champion in kayaking, speedskating, luge, hammer throwing, or the caber. Your great power forward might be a better tight end.

The first pitfall is forgetting to measure athlete to athlete without looking at the coaching and time allotted to developing this athlete. If a high school discus thrower plays football and wrestles for four years, he would only have a total of 12 months devoted to throwing. You will match that in their freshman year in college.

Shouldn't that alone make them better?

Pitfall the second...

"Looks like Tarzan, Plays like Jane." This line is probably as old as American

Football. Yet, we coaches all fall for it. You look at this kid...a specimen of all that our sport glorifies. Tall, fast, strong, lean, quick, smart...then, the whistle blows and the games begin and our hero ...fades...to...black. Every coach has seen it. I often note that the biggest mistake high school track coaches make is that they “recruit the *image* of a thrower.” Somebody says “throwers are big,” so the coach lines up every big, fat, grossly out of shape kid in the school and hands them a disc and shot. Throwers are fast. Throwers are mean. Throwers get big after lifting for six years.

Looks like Tarzan, throws like Jane. Every school seems to have a “Big Wally,” a big kid who waddles into the ring and does a standing throw...good enough to win in the eighth grade, laughable in high school, unthinkable in college.

Go to a football summer camp at a university and watch the same thing happen. The head coach, who appears for almost twelve seconds a day, will look over at a kid who has all the tools and begin recruiting. They ignore the fact that the kid is going to look just like that in five years, a man among boys...but in college, there ain't no boys.

This has been called the “Notre Dame” problem, too. For years, Notre Dame would recruit the best lineman in the USA...high school kids who dominated at 6'5" and 265 pounds. Four years later as seniors at Notre Dame, they would play at 6'5", 265 pounds. The Notre Dame Problem combines elements of both pitfalls, but you have to be careful about recruiting “the image” and forgetting what four years of maturity and weightlifting can do for some other kids.

So, how do you recruit?

First, try not to recruit. Offer kids lots and lots and lots of opportunities. Get them off the Gamecubes and into a variety of sports. When I grew up, we had basketball and baseball at our school and neither excited me. But, my family loved track and we loved football. Fortunately, I had the chance to be exposed to other sports. Those kids who get key holed into one sport at an early age may never really root out their potential. How many schools offer lifting meets, Highland Games, Strongman comps, wrestling teams, rowing, speedskating...well, you get the point.

Second, if you are a coach or parent, look to the long term. Beyond high school, even beyond college, the athletes you work with should have opportunities to compete...**and improve**...long after the age of 18. Don't forget Coach Maughan's point about “smarts.” Be sure to take care of education, career, social life, and family life. Don't fall into the trap that many professional athletes fall into...it even has a name, “Delayed Adolescence Syndrome”...and have nothing at the end of that rainbow.

Finally, if you are an athlete keep exploring the world of sports. If you are an Olympic Lifter, consider a powerlifting meet or a Highland Game. There are lessons to be learned there. If you are in fighting sports, try somebody else's game. It can be illuminating.

One of the goals of this book is to remind everyone that training should be **complementary**. To get to the top requires a good base...learn all you can and wait as long as you can to focus on just one sport.

The Art of Long Term Athletic and Fitness Planning

First, why does your family doctor want to punch your personal trainer? Why does Prozac help most runners? Why doesn't everybody bench 200 since I can bench 400? Health...Fitness...what is the difference and why does answering one single question clarify 99% of athletic and fitness planning?

Health: the inter-"play" of the body's systems...best discovered

by blood tests. Real blood tests!

Fitness/Performance: the ability to do a task.

- Is a six minute mile the sign of health?
- Is Mr. Olympia healthy?
- Is the guy who benched 900 the paragon of health?

Health

Fitness

The best thing for _____ is _____.

The best thing for _____ is _____.

The best thing for _____ is _____.

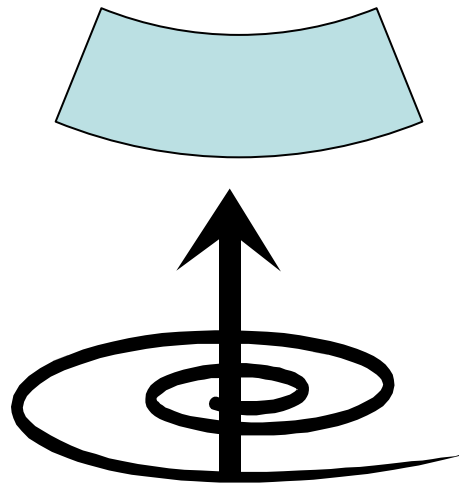
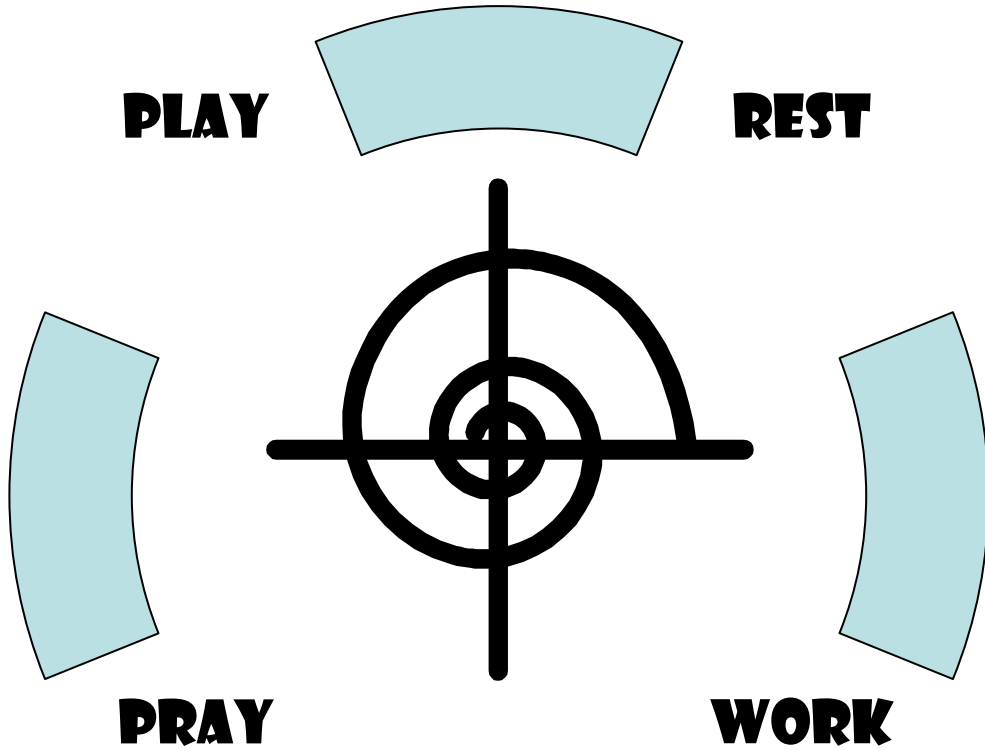
The best thing for _____ is _____.

The best thing for _____ is _____.

The best thing for _____ is _____.

The best thing for _____ is _____.

How do we answer these questions???



Three Pillars for Each Concept

- Work

Health

Fitness/Performance

Longevity

- Rest

Health

Fitness/Performance

Longevity

- Play

Health

Fitness/Performance

Longevity

- Pray

Health

Fitness/Performance

Longevity

* Prudence and Planning...everybody sets goals, so why are Americans so fat? Could most people get more from failure than success? Learn a four part approach that looks so simple, yet could be the difference in success or failure in sports...and life. Why the "Alpo Diet" works wonders.

Prudence

"The Queen of the Virtues"
Prudence Based "Goal Chart"

The Mission	Pain	Pleasure
Do		
Don't		

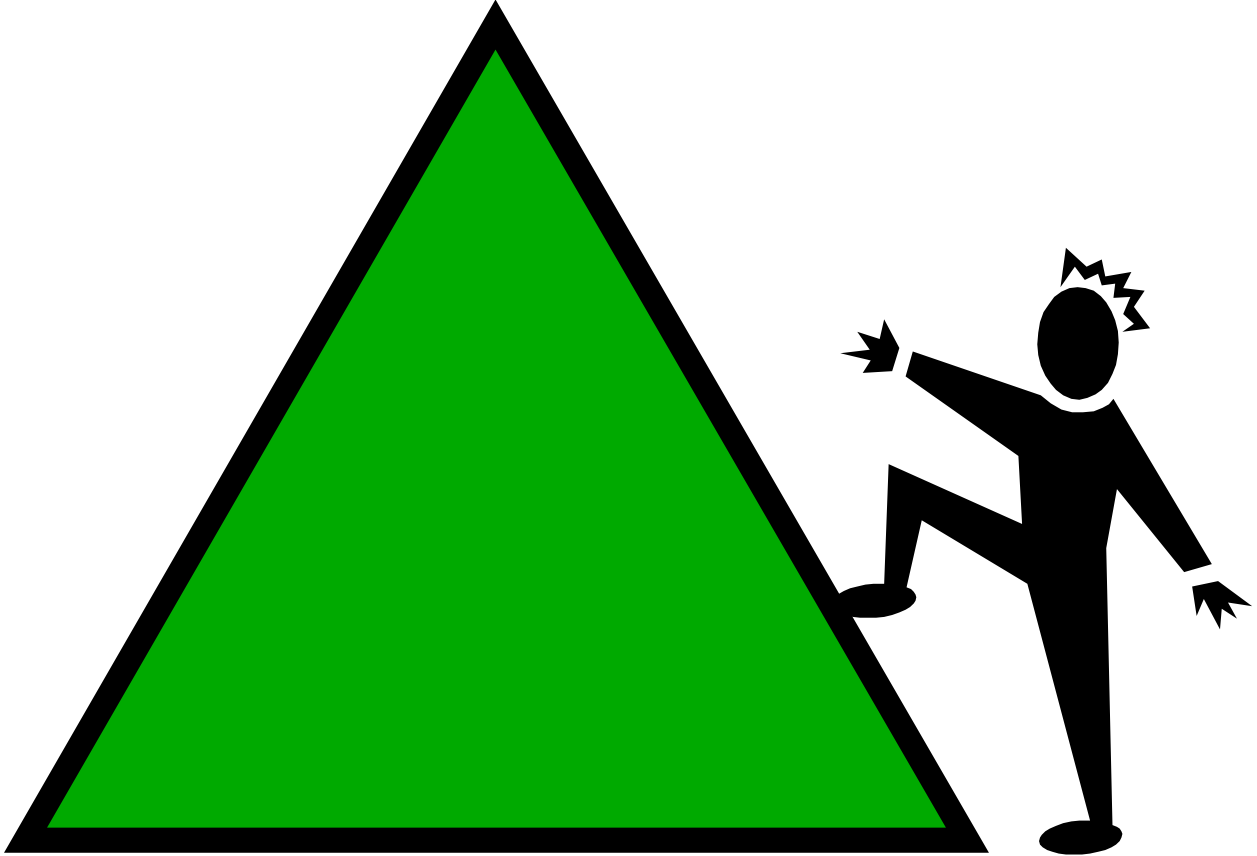
Examples:

"Mork" and Mindy and the Olympic Trials
Safe Environment Reporting

Key Points:

- Don't just establish a goal. Think through the "joy(s) of failure"
- Don't just establish a goal. Think through the "pain(s) of success"
- Make the Pleasure of achieving your goal so overriding that...
- Make the Pain of Failure "real."

* The Pyramid of Success, or, "Don't ask me about creatine if you don't eat breakfast." Maslow was right...Scuba Divers and Sharks. Why older athletes beat the pants off of you without doing that "training" thing.



The Base: Don't Smoke, Wear your seatbelt. Floss. Eat Breakfast. Drink Water...sure, sure you do.

The "next" level: "General" stuff...sure, sure you do.

The "next" level: the "Top End" stuff in your sport/activity...

The Top: Those "supplements" that put you over the competition...the guy at the bar with cool hair, the blonde with the butt, the other thrower(s), who or whatever.

* The "Four Seasons:" Why reinvent the wheel...er, year. A simple system for fatloss, strength gain, and athletic prowess. The single, number one, overriding, most important eight hours of your life!

The "Four Seasons"

I agree. It makes perfect sense. The idea of progressively adding weight to the major lifts in an orderly, logical manner makes perfect sense. Starting at 100 pounds in the squat, one should easily add five pounds a week so in one year we squat 360 pounds, in two, 620 pounds, in three, ...

Except the human body is not that kind of machine. It adapts in rhythms predating the logical philosophers, the inventors of exercise machines and the prayers of lifting hopefuls. Taking inspiration from Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," I would like to suggest a year round approach based on the rhythms of the four seasons of the year. Now, I realize that some lifters may live in states with only two seasons, as the old joke goes: "July and winter." But, adapting training to the ancient echoes of our hunter-gatherer roots provides opportunities for continued improvement, enthusiasm and insights about one's true potential.

Everybody has a story like this: after months of frustration, "out of nowhere" one makes substantial gains in size, leanness, strength, speed or some other quantifiable, or noticeable, measurement. I work with a young lady who showed no progress in weight loss (although she went from a size 12 to a size 10) for months, then suddenly dropped twenty pounds "overnight." Wouldn't it be nice if we could plan these "miracles?" I believe we can, but we must respect the natural rhythms and patterns that help, or hinder, improvements.

As a teacher for most of my professional career, it is easy for me to relate to the kind of training that works best in the autumn. It is "Back to School" time, it is football season. This time of year is perfect for disciplined training programs. Long term programs based on extensive cycling and adherence to percentages can be done in the fall. Disciplined tough programs along the lines of "Twenty rep squat" workouts are ideal at this time. Construct structured programs in the fall. Trying to learn a new lift? Do you wish to add snatches and cleans to your training? Learning new lifts is ideal in the fall. As the children march off to school, march into the weightroom and spend four months learning the Olympic lifts.

As the winter months approach, we begin to prepare for the cold and the dark. Forget getting lean when nature wants to "add a layer." The winter is time for the three GH's of training: Go Heavy, Go Hard and Go Home." Traditionally, winter training has been the time for three "total" body workouts a week along the lines of cleans, benches and squats. Recently, many people have begun training with an upper body day, a lower body day and a third "total body" day of snatches, cleans and variations. For many trainers, rest time and total training time is more affected by room temperature than fatigue. Garages in the Northern and Mountain States are not the place for long, drawn out workouts. It is hard to do tricep kickbacks with frostbitten fingers.

Yet, in the midst of winter comes New Year's Day. As the rest of world writes out resolutions, this is an ideal time to look forwards and backwards. Look past over the last year and the list the "Top Ten" things that have improved. Or, have separate lists for training, personal, and professional. Compare lifts or photos from last year. Then, write

out a list of training goals for the upcoming year. Give yourself the full 365 days to lose the inches off the waist or twenty pounds to the bench.

Spring is the time of rebirth, the time to renew. It is also the time to get injured. After months of heavy training, many people want to sprint outside on the first flower filled day and ...snap. Hamstring pull. Yes, all that heavy training led to wonderful improvements in muscles mass. The extra layers of body fat, to keep a cold lifter warm, also change the dynamics of movement. The extra strength and size are wonderful, except that the body needs a few days to adapt before all out sprinting. Spring is time for "Transformation" programs. Let the reps increase in the gym, but start to measure rest time. Add some movements that mimic outdoor activities. Traditionally, calisthenics have been used to prepare athletes for movement. Burpees (the Marine Corps "squat thrust"), "Jumping Jacks," High Knee Running ("Knees Up, Mother Brown!") and a host of jumping, leaping, pushing and pulling actions can be done in the confines of a small room. The old dictum of "If you want to run fast, you have to train fast" certainly remains true.

As the world begins heating up, it is also easier to get lean. By now, most people have forgotten their New Year's resolution to lose the gut, but this is the time to do it. Use the longer, hotter days of summer to train outside. Although sandbag training can be done year round, it is a lot "cleaner" to do a sandbag workout on a sunny day rather than in a deluge. Put the weights on the backyard lawn and do some workouts. Whether you ride bikes, rollerblade, run with the dog and kids, play sports at picnics, go to a Highland Games and throw stuff, have fun outside in the summer! Yet, as you are enjoying your fitness review your goals. What needs to be improved? Where are your weak points? What do you need to learn? The answers to these questions will provide the basis of your disciplined fall programs.

A year round approach can be this simple. Subtle changes in training, based on the seasons, lead to a better overall total training program. It is still progressive, yet allows for a great deal of variety. File training ideas and training programs into folders that correspond to the seasons. Hill sprinting is wonderful, but is it safe in the frozen evenings of January? Do you want to spend endless hours in the gym on a perfect summer day? Working with the rhythms of nature keeps the eye on the horizon and keeps progress in the gym. It's natural.

(Originally printed in "The Dinosaur Files.")

Fall: Disciplined, Structured "Learn Something" Training

Winter: Go Heavy, Go Hard, Go Home

Spring: Transform

Summer: Lean Up and Live Outside

Question: I still have a problem with craving “carbs.” What do I do?

Answer: I had the same problem!

I decided to test a concept I read in "Lights Out." This week, I ate only meat (eggs, chicken, red meat), drank water and coffee BUT, with my new wooden window shades, slept up to ten hours a night. On Wednesday, I ate some steamed veggies for lunch and had a salad or two throughout the week. My usual supplements: fish oil capsules, Mg and K, and Vitamin E.

On Sunday, I weighed 226 with a "not so good" waist measurement. On Friday, I weighed 214 and my daughter, Kelly, was able to tighten the waist tape to 34 and a half. (I'm age 43) My training, peaking for a meet, was some easy sets of overhead squats, a couple of snatches, and some lock out work on my jerk.

My point: sleep may really be the secret. I have always wondered what would be the world's cheapest diet. Nobody campaigns for:

1. More sleep (it is free; no market)
2. Really, few argue for more water (again, no market)

The same holds true for Mg supp's. If you read the Eades' book, "Protein Power Lifespan Program," they have a whole chapter on miracle magnesium. Again, this is a very inexpensive supplement.

Eggs are pretty cheap, too. At Costco yesterday, I bought five dozen for around three dollars (I think). My next book, "The really cheap discus throwing Olympic lifter poor guy diet," will be on the shelf soon. Look for it. Or, just take it and run out of the store.

I was really surprised to see how extra sleep carried over to more weight (simple scale) loss. True, I didn't measure fat save for waist measurement, but I really found this short experiment worth thinking about for athletes.

* The three great lessons of life and how to apply these “simple, but not easy lessons to sports improvement!

Show up,
Don't quit,
Ask questions

Putting it all together...

First, when you hear something new and groovy take a moment to run it through the "duck test" (If it walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, it's probably a duck);

Second, assess your goals (and the anchors that drag them);

Third, address the "bottom" of the pyramid before you climb to the top;

Fourth, there are "times" for everything, but be sure to give yourself some time to enjoy the journey;

Fifth, would you *please* go to bed and sleep;

Finally, to win...you have to be there.

On Successful Failure and Failing Success

The following is from a very special book that I wrote for a very special reason for a very special person. This little entry seemed very fitting for our final chapter.

Most people are going to miss the point here, so let me start off by reminding myself that most people miss the point of anything related to success anyway, so I shouldn't worry too much about most people missing the point.

The point? Well, you will have to bear with me a little bit, but the basic idea is this: sometimes, NOT getting a goal or a dream spurs people into making a greater impact on the world in general than fulfilling that goal or dream. And, the reverse is true, too: getting that dream can just flatten a person out for years to come.

I have known a lot of College English Majors who spend four years writing their own work in Creative Writing and poetry classes and never write another essay as long as they live. They may spend hours red penning in semi-colons and the words "transitive verb" above a student's paper, but never again write a composition. They attained the degree...and stopped writing.

Many athletes sweat and fight for four years of high school to get a scholarship to college, then quit the first weeks of college practice often because "it doesn't mean anything" to them.

Mark Twight, the author of "Kiss or Kill," and one of the world's foremost mountain climbers, noted the same thing at my dinner table not long ago. Faced with a decision to keep climbing and probably die on Mount Everest or to come back to base camp, he came back down. But, he noted, he learned far more from this failure than would have from succeeding.

In a sense, success can dilute the lessons of life. No, I am not telling you to fail, it is just that success seems to prod most people into rethinking their attempts, their journey, their path.

Joseph Campbell, the late scholar whose writings led to the "Star Wars" saga, commented on this several times in interviews. Campbell decided NOT to go on and get his doctorate. Campbell chose not to do it and often encouraged his students to not go on to advanced degrees either. He also warned them of getting buttonholed in a job that stopped them from exploring all the directions that life presented them. He noted that people who earned their terminal degree and were next appointed to their dream job often "flattened" out. Much like Earl Nightingale warned us: "A rut is a grave with the ends kicked out."

Every four years, the world turns its attention for a few weeks to the Olympic sports. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that one of the worst kept secrets of Olympic sports is how many of the athletes quit...in fact, they can barely stomach to think about it...their sport after the Olympics. Even gold medalists abandon the pool, track, field, and court. After all the sacrifice and pain, "here is your medal, thank you very much, next!" just doesn't seem to fulfill the athlete as much as the dreams of victory while training.

Those who fail to make their goals turn to coaching, writing or other forms to continue expressing their goals in other mediums. Or, they take those lessons learned and parlay them into a successful life...but, they don't just drop them and walk away.

Now, I'm not encouraging failure, nor the initiating of a "culture of failure." I coached football at the high school level for a long time and I realized a very unsettling thing: when we began losing games, my athletes were getting more out of losing than winners did from winning.

When you win a game, as I had the good fortune to win many playing for South

San Francisco High School, the team goes into the locker room and before you untie your shoes, the coach is talking about next week. The total amount of celebration in a winning locker room...for true winners...is often not very much!

But, the losers, the losers have hugs, tears, kisses, long speeches...usually from the prettiest girls I noted. While the victors are thinking of yet another week of noses on the grindstone, the losers are being cuddled and caressed back to a smile. Okay, I exaggerated, but not a lot!

Don't let success flatten you nor let failure let you join the "Loser's Club." Learn from failure, enjoy it if you can, but plug along into another expedition to the top.

When you win, be gracious. When you get your goals, dream of other goals.

Special Supplement: The Pacifica Barbell Club Materials

When I pulled out my old journals, I found a wealth of information gleaned from the hours spent at the PBBC. I felt that the world needed to keep these gems of wisdom.

Anyone who occasionally has to listen to someone regaling an old PBBC story will appreciate the section “Dick Notmeyer on “Life and Lifting”” although it may not help. The PBBC program that follows on “Life and Lifting” is a tribute to the logical, sensible mind of Dick Notmeyer.

“He who lifts the heaviest weights gets the strongest!”

The Never Before Published “Pacifica Barbell Club Program”

The attempts to steal this program are legendary. Members of other local clubs would use deceit, conniving, and lying to bring home the secrets of the gym on Moana Way, the home of the Pacifica Barbell Club.

You may now view it for the first time:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Friday	Saturday
Snatch	Jerk off Racks	Snatch	Snatch	Jerk off Racks
Clean & Jerk	Front Squat	Clean & Jerk	Clean & Jerk	Front Squat
Hang Snatch	Behind Neck	Hang Snatch	Hang Snatch	Behind Neck
Pull	Press	Pull	Pull	Press

Tuesdays and Sundays were days of rest.

When not pointing to a meet . . .

When not pointing to a specific meet, we would include many different bodybuilding movements. Included in this were Snatch Deadlifts and Shrugs, Bench Presses, Back Squats, Incline Dumbbell Presses, and arm work.

Three Weeks Before a Meet

Three weeks before a lifting meet was time for a “heavy, gutsy week,” to quote Dick. This week involved maximum attempts, lots of lifts, and lots of pain. The Friday session would be the heaviest, often resulting in personal records. Personally, when I followed Dick’s advice and went after it this week, I lifted well in meets.

The “Recycle”

A term unused anywhere else in the world, “Recycling” was Dick’s term for the three week period getting ready for the meet. The first week would emphasize triples, the second doubles, and singles in the one or two easy sessions the week of the meet.

Daily Warmup

After weighing in, general stretching would begin the day. Two interesting stretches were shoulder dislocates with the “shoulder stretching machine,” a broomstick, and ankle stretches on the “ankle stretching machine,” a step. Sit ups and hyperextensions followed stretching. After stretching, we used an unloaded bar to practice snatch and warm up the bottom position. Moving up to 95 pounds, then 115 pounds to repeat the movement and get the bottom position ready. With 135 pounds, Dick would push the bar down while the lifter sat in the overhead squat position trying to squeeze the knees wider and wider apart. Now, you’re ready for anything.

Performance of the Lifts

One thing Dick was adamant about, perhaps even obsessed about, was the insistence that his lifters never “power” the weight up but always take the lift to the deep position. He felt that power lifts taught the wrong pull and would fail the lifter on maximum attempts.

The Three Keys to Success in the Olympic Lifts

Dick felt that there were three keys to success in Olympic Lifting:

1. Leg Strength
2. Pulling Strength
3. Tranquil Mind

Leg Strength

Leg strength was increased by doing rock bottom, ass on the heels, upright, elbows high, Front Squats. Dick felt that “you can’t Clean and Jerk it unless you can Front Squat it for a triple.” High repetition Back Squats could *supplement* leg workouts, but the key is Front Squats.

Pulling Strength

Pulling strength was increased by Notmeyer High Pulls.

1. Grab the bar in a snatch grip with straps.
2. Stand upright with bar at crotch.
3. Lean back to “align the shoulders”
4. Dip the bar to the knees
5. Pull it “High and Back to you”

Dick Notmeyer quotes on this exercise:

“In dong pulls, speed is the number one concern. And, pull it high, don’t go down to meet it.”

“Twice a week, pull it high from the hang for 5’s and 6’s. And get the elbows high.”

“Pull it high and back to you.”

Tranquil Mind

Dick Notmeyer believed that a relaxed athlete, a composed athlete, competed better than an overcharged, raging bull. Humor helps, preparation helps, fun helps, packing your gear with you on a plane helps, getting to a meet early helps, anything that makes the athlete able to lift the correct way at the correct time is the key. Limit the number of warmups before going on the platform and know that the weeks of preparation will pay off.

Meet Warm Ups

Dick always told me the story of Bob Bednarski warming up for a meet Our warm ups followed the same idea and, with Dave Turner’s help, I was able to find the original *Strength and Health* article about Barski’s back stage attempts:

“Bednarski played it smart. While Joe Dube took countless warmups, Bob took only a total of 15 lifts including the 7 successes he had on the platform. This means that he took only 8 warm-ups. It might be interesting to the lifter who always leaves his best lifts in the warm-up room to see exactly what lifts Bob took at the Nationals. Here are his lifts including his lifts in competition:

Press: (205, 275, 325, 375), 420,440, 456 ¼

Snatch: (205, 255, 295), 325, 340

Clean and Jerk: (325), 425,486 ½”

Dick’s lifters strove for “6 for 6 and all P.R’s” on the platform.

Pressouts

At the end of every set of jerks, whether from the floor or from the racks, finish the last rep with short two-three inch “elbow bends” called pressouts. Do anywhere from three to eight repetitions. These build support strength throughout the body, especially evident in the *serratus* muscles covering the rib cage.

Heels on Lifting Shoes

Many lifters feel that heels limit pulling power, but Dick always said that a stable bottom position more than made up for the loss of a few pounds in pulling power. One day, Dick showed me a number of lifters’ pictures with built up heels. Bob Bednarski had high heels and he wrote:

“I employ the squat style, but in order to maintain good balance in the low position I had to have my shoes built up in the heel. Some lifters need no heel at all for a good stable balance. These men are blessed with good flexibility. There are always basic rules we must adhere to in order to do our best. The Clean and Jerk is no exception. It may look simple to perform, but a pull performed incorrectly will leave a man flat on his back faster than if Frazier or Ali had put him there.”

“Push the floor away”

The best advice for lifting I ever received from Dick concerned the start of the lifts. He would emphasize “Hips down, Hips down! Hold your shoulders back!” Okay, fine, so how do I move the bar, with what? Dick simply said: “Push the floor away.” This stopped me from shooting my butt up and dropping my shoulders. Just “push the floor away” until you pull it “high and back to you.”

The start of the lift becomes a leg press, not a powerlifting deadlift. Others describe it differently, for example, Bednarski writes:

“When we start to pull off the floor we must always remember to get in a position that is both comfortable and efficient. Again this position will vary from lifter to lifter, depending upon his flexibility. It is most important that the shoulders be just in front of the bar with the back flat or in a slight arch, the arms should be straight and the head fixed in a forward glance. As the bar comes off the floor, it should be pulled smoothly and SLOWLY, with a gradual acceleration.”

The Dick Notmeyer Glossary

Blue Plate Specials

Building the lower back, the *spinae erectors*, was done on ancient sets of wooden blocks covered in what, at one time, may have been yellow-green shag carpet. Hooking one’s ankles under a bar fastened between two wall studs, the athlete positioned the *genitals* between a space in the blocks. The exercise was the hyperextension, but filled with danger. A small, square bit of pad was placed on the cement floor to prevent head banging. The “Blue Plate Specials” were 102.5 pound blue weights which Dick would hoist on the upper shoulders and head. Part of the fun of the exercise was holding the weight, doing the hyperextensions and trying not to let the weight smash your forehead

between padded cement and blue plate. Doing this exercise “*to failure*” has the same meaning as the entrance to Dante’s Inferno, “Abandon all hope ye who enter here.”

Those who survived were rewarded with very strong lower backs.

Behind the Neck Presses

The most complex exercise ever invented is Dick Notmeyer’s “Behind the Neck Presses.” We will discuss this in a step by step manner, although it will still not make sense:

1. Place the bar at the end of the bench. Part of the fun of this exercise is loading extra plates. You see, with the bar straddling the bench, adding weight to one side makes the other side flip up. Great fun for the whole family when the bar swings up and careens into a lifting buddy.
2. Sitting on the bench, grip the bar in the snatch grip.
3. Stand up with the bar. Lean back to “pull the shoulders back.”
4. Dip the bar to the knees, snatch the bar overhead, and sit on the bench. All in one movement, ideally.
5. Begin pressing the bar behind the neck. Get that goofy, hyper-smile grimace you can look at in the mirror.
6. On the last rep, let the bar come down and stand up.
7. Gingerly, replace the bar on the bench.
8. Add weight on one side allowing the bar to flip up and hit a training partner. Laugh. Have Dick once again explain that you need to keep your hands on the bar when adding weight.
9. Repeat until everyone has been hit by the flipping bar.

Arm Work

Arm work at the Pacifica Barbell Club involved a highly scientific, and systematic, program of fooling around on the preacher bench. The key was to insure that one’s arms were draped over the preacher bench in clear view of the mirror. The athlete begins by squashing his arms across the preacher bench and stating: “I wish my arms looked like this.” A few meaningless sets of curls with the E-Z curl bar were done.

Triceps Work has a famous story, which I doubt is true. In the dark recesses of the gym’s history, a young trainer lay on a bench and began doing triceps extensions. Struggling to get those triceps “pumped,” the lifter tried to bounce the weight, as we often do in Bench Presses. So, he focused at the top of the extension, brought the bar down fast, and attempted to bounce the bar off of his forehead. He succeeded in bouncing the bar, but, for some reason, could not finish the rep.

Recent research has deemed that the P.B.B.C. arm work program to be referred to, in science circles, as “screwing around.”

Ab Work

Each day, the various team members and trainers would make the pilgrimage to 790 Moana Way and learn the nuances of the Olympic Lifts. But before going to the platform, one must work one’s abs. The ab machine was a standard slant board with a small pole to help one hold steady while getting on and off.

Dick was the master of ab work. He could do multiple sets with weights held behind his head. Multiple sit up record boards were littered throughout the ab machine area. Very, very few people attempted to break these records.

Bench Press Club

The goal of every member of the P.B.B.C., whether lifter, thrower, or trainer, was to move up to the next twenty-five pound level on the Bench Press Board. The Board was stricter than any powerlifting meet.

1. No arching, bouncing, wraps, cheating, uneven pressouts, or anything else.
2. Bring the bar down under control, wait, wait, wait, wait, for Dick's clap.
3. Press the bar out.
4. If Dick wasn't there, it didn't count.

The Club started at 200 pounds and moved up in increments of twenty-five pounds. It also included the strange case of the three members of the "Red Star Club" being all next to each other.

The Red Star Club

The most exclusive club, and with the least interest in joining it, belonged to the members of the Red Star Club. The members died.

The Hangman's Noose

Above the platform at the Pacifica Bar Bell Club a hangman's noose greeted every lifter into the gym. This was a lasting reminder of the most famous of the Red Star Club's members, Joe Vega. He had followed Dick's advice to the letter, then fell for a woman who liked thin men and dropped all his gains. Then, she dropped him.

He decided to start training again. On his last visit, before leaving, he strung the noose. He would die in a pool hall before ever returning.

For a few years after Joe's death, Dick would hear rustling in the weight room and the clanging of weights. Reg, the dog, would stare into the gym until Dick would finally come in and say "Joe, I gotta go to work in the morning, cut it out!" The gym would quiet.

Fun Time

Howard Will, the cigar smoking and dry martini swilling health enthusiast, coined this term for the time spent doing squats. Any squatting motion could be included under "Fun Time," however, the term is used best when attempting as many squats as possible with bodyweight loaded on the bar. When doing up to fifty reps in this exercise, every rep above thirty is just fun, fun, fun. Really, you should try it.

Country Music

To insure the highest levels of focus and intensity, Dick chose to allow his athletes to listen to Country Music. This insured that no lifter would be caught spending time listening to the music or being unduly sidetracked by a favorite tune. It also allowed group singing of Eddie Arnold's great yodeling ballad, "The Lonesome Cattle Call." Cats from all over Pacifica would come to the gym after these sessions.

The Incline

Perhaps the finest piece of equipment in the gym was the Incline Bench Press. Commercial quality with sturdy foot rests, the incline was used most of the time as a seat. But, if you needed to use it, the incline could be used for training.

Widers

The Black Widow population of Pacifica seemed centered around the two by fours that housed the P.B.B.C. gymnasium. Eric Seubert seemed to have a particular aversion to poisonous creatures, so he would occasionally go on “Wider” hunts with a weightlifting boot and a torch made of paper towels. Safety was not an issue, but the “Wider” population would drop dramatically.

Clackers (Spelling Unknown)

Stupid behaviors including statements, actions, trippings and general stupid behaviors were dealt with by “Clackers.” The “Clacker” was a small, pronged bell that would be rung with a chorus of lifters yelling “Clackers.” There was no real reason for any of this, of course.

Snatch Grip Deadlifts and Shrugs

Although nothing unusual, this exercise involved a wide grip deadlift, focusing on pushing the platform away with the legs, not shooting the hips up. After three reps, the athlete finished by making huge circles with the shoulders, the “shrugs.”

To make the lift easier, Dick would get into the lifter’s line of vision and ask questions, then say “you don’t know” and “what do you know?” You see, the lifter was making the international sign of “I dunno.” Dick was making a joke. You had to be there.

Signing In

During each workout, Dick (and only Dick) would write the various names of the gym members training that day. The ebb and flow of names provides a short history of the gym and the seriousness of the trainers.

Record Board

Breaking P.B.B.C. gym records is not an easy thing to do. The record board was based on weight classes from 1968 and includes Press, Snatch, Clean and Jerk, Squat, Bench and Behind the Neck Press. Record holders include national champions, international competitors and a lot of crazies.

The Dessicated Liver and Brewers Yeast Incident

Although perhaps not familiar with most club members, in the late Seventies, a series of terrible smells of toxic proportions nearly leveled the gym. Eric Seubert and Dan John had read that large amounts of Dessicated Liver and Brewers Yeast mimicked anabolic steroids. They ordered two thousand tablets of each and began eating them in handfuls of fifty or more three times a day.

What they did not understand was the digestive tract. Yeast and liver merely “ferment” at these levels, providing an “air” pocket to grow in the system. This “air” needs to be released, usually during Front Squats.

It was before the era of Hazardous Materials Teams and lives could have been saved with some foresight and planning.

What did you have for Breakfast?

This question: “What did you have for Breakfast?” is the answer to all questions and the question to all answers. “I want to gain weight, I want to lose weight, I want to lift more” were all answered by Dick with “What did you have for Breakfast?”

A good breakfast: Meat, eggs, other stuff

A bad breakfast: Not meat, eggs, other stuff

Note: the all-time answer by a young new lifter: “I had a great breakfast: seven bowls of Cheerios!”

The Old Guy

Dick’s nemesis in the Pier to Park race was a ninety-seven year old man who would heckle Dick mercilessly through the year. “The Old Guy” was ultimately beaten by Dick in this race. Dick had the dignity not to trash talk him in the hearse.

P.R.

It means “Personal Record.” For most, it meant one’s best snatch, clean and jerk, or other major lift. For others, it meant best triple in the behind the neck press with dumbbells on a Thursday in July.

Gym Dues

The P.B.B.C. was not a cheap place to work out. Gym dues, however, were able to remain the same from the beginning of gym history until its cluttered closing. Twenty-five cents a week was the standard fee, or about one dollar every four weeks.

“Jumping out of the window” Club

The roots of this particular club are difficult to find, although gym historians believe two basic theories. One, this behavior’s roots come from the Plyometrics craze of the mid-Seventies. Theory two has more supporters: it was a stupid thing to do and extremely difficult, so let’s make a contest of it.

Correct performance:

1. Stand behind the line. (Originally, it was on the platform mats)
2. Leap out of open window. (There have been no “closed” window incidents)
3. Land outside. Try not to hit head on top of frame, but it could still count.

Chalking Up

Dick’s advice carried over to every aspect of behavior at meets. Chalking up, preparing the hands to lift by adding chalk, was an art form.

Correct performance:

1. Stand with a slight twist to the audience so your right arm (or left if it is bigger) faces the head judge and your chest “twists” away.
2. Grab chalk and bring your right arm next to your body as you inflate your chest. Keep forearm at a ninety degree angle, forearm parallel with floor

3. Dig biceps into inflated chest. This causes the biceps to look huge.
4. Wait for “ooo’s” and “aah’s” from delighted fans.

When Joe Vega was preparing for a lift at a powerlifting contest, a young “wannabee” bodybuilder and aspiring actor named Arnold Schwartznegger gasped when he saw Joe’s arm. Dick was amazed this novice lifter did not know this trick.

Slapping the Ceiling

The P.B.B.C. program lends itself to great leaping abilities. One day, a small cadre of runners came to the gym to look around. One asked Dick: “What good is lifting?” Dick simply said: “Jump up and touch the ceiling.” The runner could not, he couldn’t even get the beams. “Dan, come over here.” Dick handed Dan a 45 pound plate and said: “Touch the ceiling.” Holding the weight, Dan leaped up, slapped his palm against the ceiling, then returned to training.

“That’s what’s good about lifting.”

Movie Manners

Dick occasionally filmed meets. Part of his instructions included: “Do not *adjust* yourself while I am filming.” Unfortunately, if one broke this commandment, the rewind button would play over and over again.

The 25 Pound Cat

The story of the “25 Pound Cat” can either make one trust Dick’s methods or make them run away screaming. The 25 pound cat was a feline taken under Dick’s care. Dick decided to test his beliefs in Protein Powder on the cat and, eventually, the cat grew to be the size of a small car. The cat died fighting a raccoon.

So, if anyone questions the value of protein supplements, Dick can always argue what it did for his cat.

One Arm Salute

The official “secret handshake” of the P.B.B.C. is the single arm biceps flex.

1. Inflate chest to a ridiculous level.
2. Hold right arm to side, parallel to floor.
3. Curl arm and “peak” bicep.
4. Look off into the vast unknown with a passive expression that masks the raw power of one’s person.

“...Never use this new found strength for evil gains ...”

Part of the agreement of becoming a P.B.B.C. lifter was to swear to not use one’s “new found” strength for the pursuit of evil, or, technically, “evil gains.” The oath was stated in a solemn occasion that includes much secret mumbo-jumbo and extraneous flourishes. This oath, as far as we know, has never been broken.

Dick’s Nap

The posted gym hours were basically from 2:45ish to 5 something. Dick worked an early, early morning shift and took a few hour nap before everybody showed up. Much

of the fun of the first minutes of training included watching Dick's facial stretching and contortions as he tried to "unslumber."

"Just flip through these and find the body you want . . ."

The highlight of the first day for all aspiring lifters was when Dick would hand them a muscle magazine and tell them: "Just flip through these magazines and find the body you want and I will design a program for you to look like that." "How long?" "Well, for a normal kid, a year, a year and a half. But, for you, maybe only six months." "Really."

Yeah, really.

"Like Europeans"

After Dick returned from the 1976 Olympics in Montreal, he had acquired a distaste for the European method of standing in lines. The Europeans, it seems, do not view personal space exactly the same way Americans do and would crowd, ahem, "too close" behind Dick in lines. This, of course, led to hours of Europeans squatting, Europeans benching, and Europeans chalking up. Well, you had to be there . . .

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